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Anon.

Brontë

THE
WORKS OF
CHARLOTTE
EMILY AND ANNE
BRONTË

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

SHIRLEY

VOL. I.

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(CHARLOTTE BRONTË)

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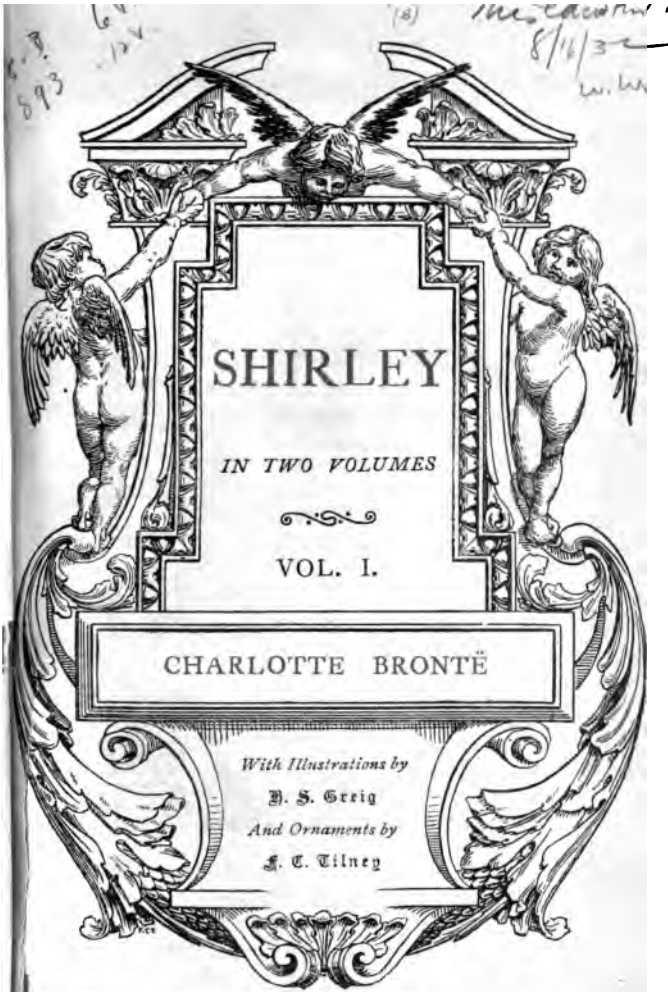

SHIRLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

With Illustrations by
H. S. Greig
And Ornaments by
F. C. Tilney

LONDON: Published by J. M. DENT and COMPANY
at ALDINE HOUSE in Great Eastern Street, E.C.
MDCCCXCVI

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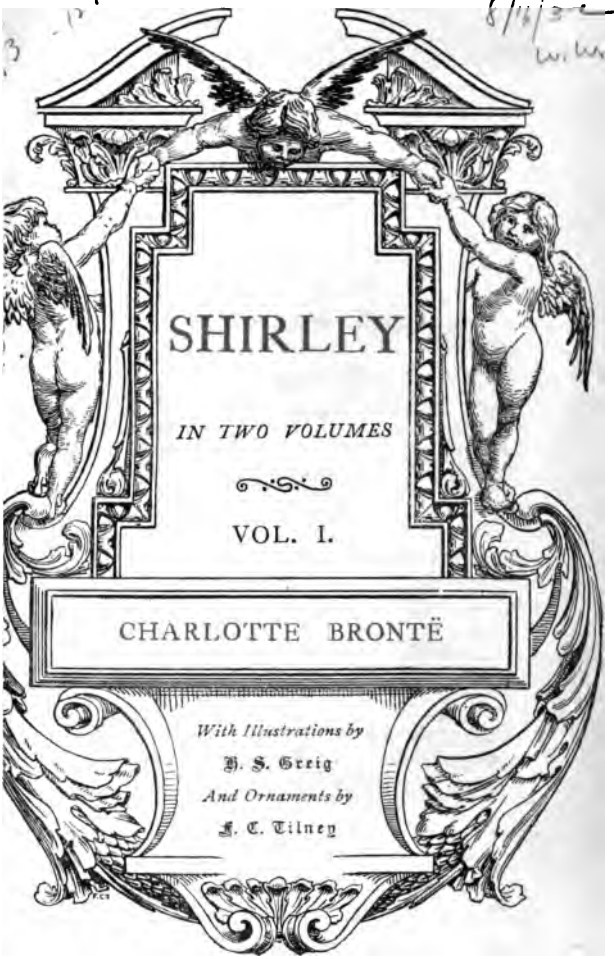

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NOTE.

SHIRLEY, although commenced immediately after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, did not appear until October 1849, just two years later. Some of its incidents probably had their origin in the stories of the strikes and riots told by Miss Wooller to the girls at Roehead School; that of Shirley's cauterising the wound caused by the bite of a dog had its counterpart in the action of Emily Brontë under similar circumstances. The book was written in a period of great domestic trouble and grief, for her brother Branwell and her sisters Emily and Anne died whilst Charlotte was engaged upon it. As Mr Birrell points out, Miss Brontë made a good use in *Shirley* of an expression used in a venomously adverse criticism of *Jane Eyre* in the *Quarterly Review*, putting it in the mouth of a despicable character, who, though only mentioned in one chapter of the book, is sketched with a firm hand. It was *Shirley* that, to her friends, told the secret of Currer Bell's identity, and the secret being out, due recognition was accorded her when, the month after its publication, she came to London, and met for the first

time some of her contemporaries in literary fame. *Shirley* has been republished many times: the following are the principal editions:—

SHIRLEY, a tale, 3 vols. 8vo. 1849.
——— another edition, 8vo. 1853.
——— another edition, 8vo. 1860.
——— another edition, 8vo. 1862.
——— another edition (Vol. ii. of "Life and Works of Charlotte Brontë and her Sisters," 7 vols.), illustrated, 8vo. 1872.
——— another edition (Vol. ii. of "Life and Works of Charlotte Brontë and her Sisters," 7 vols.), 18mo. 1888.

F. J. S.

SHIRLEY.

Chapter i.

LEVITICAL.

OF late years, an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England: they lie very thick on the hills; every parish has one or more of them; they are young enough to be very active, and ought to be doing a great deal of good. But not of late years are we about to speak; we are going back to the beginning of this century: late years—present years are dusty, sun-burnt, hot, arid; we will evade the noon, forget it in siesta, pass the mid-day in slumber, and dream of dawn.

If you think, from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama? Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid, lies before you; something unromantic as Monday morning, when all who have work wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto. It is not positively affirmed that you shall not have a taste of the exciting, perhaps towards

the middle and close of the meal, but it is resolved that the first dish set upon the table shall be one that a Catholic—ay, even an Anglo-Catholic—might eat on Good Friday in Passion Week: it shall be cold lentils and vinegar without oil; it shall be unleavened bread with bitter herbs, and no roast lamb.

Of late years, I say, an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England; but in eighteen-hundred-eleven-twelve that affluent rain had not descended: curates were scarce then: there was no Pastoral Aid — no Additional Curates' Society to stretch a helping hand to worn-out old rectors and incumbents, and give them the wherewithal to pay a vigorous young colleague from Oxford or Cambridge. The present successors of the apostles, disciples of Dr Pusey and tools of the Propaganda, were at that time being hatched under cradle-blankets, or undergoing regeneration by nursery-baptism in wash-hand-basins. You could not have guessed by looking at any one of them that the Italian-ironed double frills of its net-cap surrounded the brows of a pre-ordained, specially sanctified successor of St Paul, St Peter, or St John; nor could you have foreseen in the folds of its long night-gown the white surplice in which it was hereafter cruelly to exercise the souls of its parishioners, and strangely to nonplus its old-fashioned vicar by flourishing aloft in a pulpit the shirt-like raiment which had never before waved higher than the reading-desk.

Yet even in those days of scarcity there were curates: the precious plant was rare, but it might be found. A certain favoured district in the West Riding of Yorkshire could boast three rods of Aaron blossoming within a circuit of twenty miles. You shall see them, reader. Step into this neat garden-house on the skirts of Whinbury, walk forward into the little parlour—there they are at dinner. Allow me to introduce them to you:—

Mr Donne, curate of Whinbury; Mr Malone, curate of Briarfield; Mr Sweeting, curate of Nunnely. These are Mr Donne's lodgings, being the habitation of one John Gale, a small clothier. Mr Donne has kindly invited his brethren to regale with him. You and I will join the party, see what is to be seen, and hear what is to be heard. At present, however, they are only eating; and while they eat we will talk aside.

These gentlemen are in the bloom of youth; they possess all the activity of that interesting age—an activity which their moping old vicars would fain turn into the channel of their pastoral duties, often expressing a wish to see it expended in a diligent superintendence of the schools, and in frequent visits to the sick of their respective parishes. But the youthful Levites feel this to be dull work; they prefer lavishing their energies on a course of proceeding, which, though to other eyes it appear more heavy with ennui, more cursed with monotony, than the toil of the weaver at his loom, seems to yield them an unfailing supply of enjoyment and occupation.

I allude to a rushing backwards and forwards, amongst themselves, to and from their respective lodgings: not a round—but a triangle of visits, which they keep up all the year through, in winter, spring, summer, and autumn. Season and weather make no difference; with unintelligible zeal they dare snow and hail, wind and rain, mire and dust, to go and dine, or drink tea, or sup with each other. What attracts them, it would be difficult to say. It is not friendship; for whenever they meet they quarrel. It is not religion; the thing is never named amongst them: theology they may discuss occasionally, but piety—never. It is not the love of eating and drinking: each might have as good a joint and pudding, tea as potent, and toast as succulent, at his own lodgings, as is served to him at his brother's. Mrs

Gale, Mrs Hogg, and Mrs Whipp—their respective landladies—affirm that "it is just for nought else but to give folk trouble." By "folk," the good ladies of course mean themselves; for indeed they are kept in a continual "fry" by this system of mutual invasion.

Mr Donne and his guests, as I have said, are at dinner; Mrs Gale waits on them, but a spark of the hot kitchen fire is in her eye. She considers that the privilege of inviting a friend to a meal occasionally, without additional charge (a privilege included in the terms on which she lets her lodgings), has been quite sufficiently exercised of late. The present week is yet but at Thursday, and on Monday, Mr Malone, the curate of Briarfield, came to breakfast and stayed dinner; on Tuesday, Mr Malone and Mr Sweeting of Nunnely, came to tea, remained to supper, occupied the spare bed, and favoured her with their company to breakfast on Wednesday morning; now, on Thursday, they are both here at dinner, and she is almost certain they will stay all night. "C'en est trop," she would say, if she could speak French.

Mr Sweeting is mincing the slice of roast-beef on his plate, and complaining that it is very tough; Mr Donne says the beer is flat. Ay! that is the worst of it: if they would only be civil, Mrs Gale wouldn't mind it so much; if they would only seem satisfied with what they get, she wouldn't care, but "these young parsons is so high and so scornful, they set everybody beneath their 'fit:' they treat her with less than civility, just because she does not keep a servant, but does the work of the house herself, as her mother did afore her: then they are always speaking against Yorkshire ways and Yorkshire folk," and by that very token Mrs Gale does not believe one of them to be a real gentleman, or come of gentle kin. "The old parsons is worth the whole

lump of college lads; they know what belo[illegible] manners, and is kind to high and low."

"More bread!" cries Mr Malone, in a [illegible] though prolonged but to utter two syllables, proclaims him at once a native of the land of shamrocks and potatoes. Mrs Gale hates Mr Malone more that either of the other two; but she fears him also, for he is a tall, strongly-built personage, with real Irish legs and arms, and a face as genuinely national: not the Milesian face —not Daniel O'Connell's style, but the high-featured, North-American-Indian sort of visage, which belongs to a certain class of the Irish gentry, and has a petrified and proud look, better suited to the owner of an estate of slaves, than to the landlord of a free peasantry. Mr Malone's father termed himself a gentleman: he was poor and in debt, and besottedly arrogant; and his son was like him.

Mrs Gale offered the loaf.

"Cut it, woman," said her guest; and the "woman" cut it accordingly. Had she followed her inclinations, she would have cut the parson also; her Yorkshire soul revolted absolutely from his manner of command.

The curates had good appetites, and though the beef was "tough," they ate a great deal of it. They swallowed, too, a tolerable allowance of the "flat beer," while a dish of Yorkshire pudding, and two tureens of vegetables, disappeared like leaves before locusts. The cheese, too, received distinguished marks of their attention; and a "spice-cake," which followed by way of desert, vanished like a vision, and was no more found. Its elegy was chanted in the kitchen by Abraham, Mrs Gale's son and heir, a youth of six summers: he had reckoned upon the reversion thereof, and when his mother brought down the empty platter, he lifted up his voice and wept sore.

The curates, meantime, sat and sipped their wine; a

liquor of unpretending vintage, moderately enjoyed. Mr Malone, indeed, would much rather have had whisky; but Mr Donne, being an Englishman, did not keep the beverage. While they sipped, they argued; not on politics, nor on philosophy, nor on literature—these topics were now as ever totally without interest for them—not even on theology, practical or doctrinal; but on minute points of ecclesiastical discipline, frivolities which seemed empty as bubbles to all save themselves. Mr Malone, who contrived to secure two glasses of wine, when his brethren contented themselves with one, waxed by degrees hilarious after his fashion; that is, he grew a little insolent, said rude things in a hectoring tone, and laughed clamorously at his own brilliancy.

Each of his companions became in turn his butt. Malone had a stock of jokes at their service, which he was accustomed to serve out regularly on convivial occasions like the present, seldom varying his wit; for which, indeed, there was no necessity, as he never appeared to consider himself monotonous, and did not at all care what others thought. Mr Donne, he favoured with hints about his extreme meagreness, allusions to his turned-up nose, cutting sarcasms on a certain threadbare chocolate surtout, which that gentleman was accustomed to sport whenever it rained, or seemed likely to rain, and criticisms on a choice set of cockney phrases, and modes of pronunciation, Mr Donne's own property, and certainly deserving of remark for the elegance and finish they communicated to his style.

Mr Sweeting was bantered about his stature—he was a little man, a mere boy in height and breadth compared with the athletic Malone—rallied on his musical accomplishments—he played the flute and sang hymns like a seraph (some young ladies of his parish thought), sneered at as "the ladies' pet," teased about his mamma and sisters; for whom poor Mr Sweeting had some

lingering regard, and of whom he was foolish enough now and then to speak in the presence of the priestly Paddy, from whose anatomy the bowels of natural affection had somehow been omitted.

The victims met these attacks each in his own way; Mr Donne with a stilted self-complacency, and half-sullen phlegm, the sole props of his otherwise somewhat rickety dignity; Mr Sweeting with the indifference of a light, easy disposition, which never professed to have any dignity to maintain.

When Malone's raillery became rather too offensive, which it soon did, they joined in an attempt to turn the tables on him by asking him how many boys had shouted "Irish Peter!" after him as he came along the road that day (Malone's name was Peter—the Rev. Peter Augustus Malone); requesting to be informed whether it was the mode in Ireland for clergymen to carry loaded pistols in their pockets, and a shillelagh in their hands, when they made pastoral visits: inquiring the signification of such words as vele, firrum, hellum, storrum (so Mr Malone invariably pronounced veil, firm, helm, storm), and employing such other methods of retaliation as the innate refinement of their minds suggested.

This, of course, would not do. Malone, being neither good-natured nor phlegmatic, was presently in a towering passion. He vociferated, gesticulated; Donne and Sweeting laughed. He reviled them as Saxons and snobs at the very top pitch of his high Celtic voice; they taunted him with being the native of a conquered land. He menaced rebellion in the name of his "counthry," vented bitter hatred against English rule; they spoke of rags, beggary, and pestilence. The little parlour was in an uproar; you would have thought a duel must follow such virulent abuse; it seemed a wonder that Mr and Mrs Gale did not take alarm at

the noise, and send for a constable to keep the peace. But they were accustomed to such demonstrations; they well knew that the curates never dined or took tea together without a little exercise of the sort, and were quite easy as to consequences; knowing that these clerical quarrels were as harmless as they were noisy; that they resulted in nothing; and that, on whatever terms the curates might part to-night, they would be sure to meet the best friends in the world to-morrow morning.

As the worthy pair were sitting by their kitchen fire, listening to the repeated and sonorous contact of Malone's fist with the mahogany plane of the parlour table, and to the consequent start and jingle of decanters and glasses following each assault, to the mocking laughter of the allied English disputants, and the stuttering declamation of the isolated Hibernian,—as they thus sat, a foot was heard at the outer door-step, and the knocker quivered to a sharp appeal.

Mr Gale went and opened.

"Whom have you upstairs in the parlour?" asked a voice; a rather remarkable voice, nasal in tone, abrupt in utterance.

"Oh! Mr Helstone, is it you, sir? I could hardly see you for the darkness; it is so soon dark now. Will you walk in, sir?"

"I want to know first whether it is worth my while walking in. Whom have you upstairs?"

"The curates, sir."

"What! all of them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Been dining here?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do."

With these words a person entered—a middle-aged man, in black. He walked straight across the kitchen

to an inner door, opened it, inclined his head forward, and stood listening. There was something to listen to, for the noise above was just then louder than ever.

"Hey!" he ejaculated to himself: then turning to Mr Gale—"Have you often this sort of work?"

Mr Gale had been a churchwarden, and was indulgent to the clergy.

"They're young, you know, sir—they're young," said he deprecatingly.

"Young! They want caning. Bad boys—bad boys! and if you were a Dissenter, John Gale, instead of being a good Churchman, they'd do the like—they'd expose themselves: but I'll"——

By way of finish to this sentence, he passed through the inner door, drew it after him, and mounted the stair. Again he listened a few minutes when he arrived at the upper room. Making entrance without warning, he stood before the curates.

And they were silent; they were transfixed; and so was the invader. He—a personage short of stature, but straight of port, and bearing on broad shoulders a hawk's head, beak, and eye, the whole surmounted by a Rehoboam, or shovel hat, which he did not seem to think it necessary to lift or remove before the presence in which he then stood—*he* folded his arms on his chest and surveyed his young friends—if friends they were—much at his leisure.

"What!" he began, delivering his words in a voice no longer nasal, but deep—more than deep—a voice made purposely hollow and cavernous; "What! has the miracle of Pentecost been renewed? Have the cloven tongues come down again? Where are they? The sound filled the whole house just now. I heard the seventeen languages in full action: Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia

and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; every one of these must have had its representative in this room two minutes since."

"I beg your pardon, Mr Helstone," began Mr Donne; "take a seat, pray, sir. Have a glass of wine?"

His civilities received no answer: the falcon in the black coat proceeded—

"What do I talk about the gift of tongues? Gift, indeed! I mistook the chapter, and book, and testament: Gospel for law, Acts for Genesis, the city of Jerusalem for the plain of Shinar. It was no gift, but the confusion of tongues which has gabbled me deaf as a post. *You*, apostles? What! you three? Certainly not: three presumptuous Babylonish masons—neither more nor less!"

"I assure you, sir, we were only having a little chat together over a glass of wine after a friendly dinner: settling the Dissenters!"

"Oh! settling the Dissenters—were you? Was Malone settling the Dissenters? It sounded to me much more like settling his co-apostles. You were quarrelling together; making almost as much noise—you three alone—as Moses Barraclough, the preaching tailor, and all his hearers, are making in the Methodist chapel down yonder, where they are in the thick of a revival. I know whose fault it is — it is yours, Malone."

"Mine, sir?"

"Yours, sir. Donne and Sweeting were quiet before you came, and would be quiet if you were gone. I wish when you crossed the Channel you had left your Irish habits behind you. Dublin student ways won't do here: the proceedings which might pass unnoticed in a wild bog and mountain district in

Connaught will, in a decent English parish, bring disgrace on those who indulge in them, and, what is far worse, on the sacred institution of which they are merely the humble appendages."

There was a certain dignity in the little elderly gentleman's manner of rebuking these youths; though it was not, perhaps, quite the dignity most appropriate to the occasion. Mr Helstone—standing straight as a ramrod—looking keen as a kite, presented, despite his clerical hat, black coat, and gaiters, more the air of a veteran officer chiding his subalterns, than of a venerable priest exhorting his sons in the faith. Gospel mildness—apostolic benignity, never seemed to have breathed their influence over that keen brown visage; but firmness had fixed the features, and sagacity had carved her own lines about them.

"I met Supplehough," he continued, "plodding through the mud this wet night, going to preach at Milldean opposition shop. As I told you, I heard Barraclough bellowing in the midst of a conventicle like a possessed bull; and I find *you*, gentlemen, tarrying over your half-pint of muddy port-wine, and scolding like angry old women. No wonder Supplehough should have dipped sixteen adult converts in a day—which he did a fortnight since; no wonder Barraclough, scamp and hypocrite as he is, should attract all the weaver-girls in their flowers and ribbons, to witness how much harder are his knuckles than the wooden brim of his tub; as little wonder that *you*, when you are left to yourselves, without your rectors—myself, and Hall, and Boultby—to back you, should too often perform the holy service of our church to bare walls, and read your bit of a dry discourse to the clerk, and the organist, and the beadle. But enough of the subject: I came to see Malone—I have an errand unto thee, O captain!"

"What is it?" inquired Malone discontentedly;

"there can be no funeral to take at this time of day."

"Have you any arms about you?"

"Arms, sir?—yes, and legs:" and he advanced the mighty members.

"Bah! weapons, I mean."

"I have the pistols you gave me yourself; I never part with them: I lay them ready cocked on a chair by my bedside at night. I have my blackthorn."

"Very good. Will you go to Hollow's Mill?"

"What is stirring at Hollow's Mill?"

"Nothing as yet, nor perhaps will be; but Moore is alone there: he has sent all the workmen he can trust to Stilbro'; there are only two women left about the place. It would be a nice opportunity for any of his well-wishers to pay him a visit, if they knew how straight the path was made before them."

"I am none of his well-wishers, sir: I don't care for him."

"Soh! Malone, you are afraid."

"You know me better than that. If I really thought there was a chance of a row, I would go: but Moore is a strange, shy man, whom I never pretend to understand; and for the sake of his sweet company only, I would not stir a step."

"But there *is* a chance of a row; if a positive riot does not take place—of which, indeed, I see no signs—yet it is unlikely this night will pass quite tranquilly. You know Moore has resolved to have the new machinery, and he expects two waggon loads of frames and shears from Stilbro' this evening. Scott, the overlooker, and a few picked men, are gone to fetch them."

"They will bring them in safely and quietly enough, sir."

"Moore says so, and affirms he wants nobody: some

one, however, he must have, if it were only to bear evidence in case anything should happen. I call him very careless. He sits in the counting-house with the shutters unclosed; he goes out here and there after dark, wanders right up the hollow, down Fieldhead Lane, among the plantations, just as if he were the darling of the neighbourhood, or—being, as he is, its detestation—bore a 'charmed life' as they say in tale-books. He takes no warning from the fate of Pearson, nor from that of Armitage—shot, one in his own house and the other on the moor."

"But he should take warning, sir, and use precautions too," interposed Mr Sweeting; "and I think he would if he heard what I heard the other day."

"What did you hear, Davy?"

"You know Mike Hartley, sir?"

"The Antinomian weaver. Yes."

"When Mike has been drinking for a few weeks together, he generally winds up by a visit to Nunnely vicarage, to tell Mr Hall a piece of his mind about his sermons, to denounce the horrible tendency of his doctrine of works, and warn him that he and all his hearers are sitting in outer darkness."

"Well—that has nothing to do with Moore."

"Besides being an Antinomian, he is a violent Jacobin and leveller, sir."

"I know. When he is very drunk, his mind is always running on regicide. Mike is not unacquainted with history, and it is rich to hear him going over the list of tyrants of whom, as he says, 'the revenger of blood has obtained satisfaction.' The fellow exults strangely in murder done on crowned heads, or on any head for political reasons. I have already heard it hinted that he seems to have a queer hankering after Moore: is that what you allude to, Sweeting?"

"You use the proper term, sir. Mr Hall thinks Mike has no personal hatred of Moore; Mike says he even likes to talk to him, and run after him, but he has a *hankering* that Moore should be made an example of: he was extolling him to Mr Hall the other day as the mill-owner with the most brains in Yorkshire, and for that reason he affirms Moore should be chosen as a sacrifice, an oblation of a sweet savour. Is Mike Hartley in his right mind, do you think, sir?" inquired Sweeting simply.

"Can't tell, Davy: he may be crazed or he may be only crafty—or, perhaps, a little of both."

"He talks of seeing visions, sir."

"Ay! He is a very Ezekiel or Daniel for visions. He came just when I was going to bed, last Friday night, to describe one that had been revealed to him in Nunnely Park that very afternoon."

"Tell it, sir—what was it?" urged Sweeting.

"Davy, thou hast an enormous organ of Wonder in thy cranium; Malone, you see, has none; neither murders nor visions interest him: see what a big vacant Saph he looks at this moment."

"Saph! Who was Saph, sir?"

"I thought you would not know: you may find it out: it is biblical. I know nothing more of him than his name and race; but from a boy upwards, I have always attached a personality to Saph. Depend on it he was honest, heavy, and luckless; he met his end at Gob, by the hand of Sibbechai."

"But the vision, sir?"

"Davy, thou shalt hear. Donne is biting his nails, and Malone yawning; so I will tell it but to thee. Mike is out of work, like many others, unfortunately; Mr Grame, Sir Philip Nunnely's steward, gave him a job about the priory: according to his account, Mike was busy hedging rather late in the afternoon, but before

dark, when he heard what he thought was a band at a distance, bugles, fifes, and the sound of a trumpet; it came from the forest, and he wondered that there should be music there. He looked up: all amongst the trees he saw moving objects, red, like poppies, or white, like May-blossom; the wood was full of them, they poured out and filled the park. He then perceived they were soldiers—thousands and tens of thousands; but they made no more noise than a swarm of midges on a summer evening. They formed in order, he affirmed, and marched, regiment after regiment, across the park; he followed them to Nunnely Common; the music still played soft and distant. On the common he watched them go through a number of evolutions, a man clothed in scarlet stood in the centre and directed them; they extended, he declared, over fifty acres; they were in sight half-an-hour; then they marched away quite silently: the whole time he heard neither voice nor tread—nothing but the faint music playing a solemn march."

"Where did they go, sir?"

"Towards Briarfield. Mike followed them; they seemed passing Fieldhead, when a column of smoke, such as might be vomited by a park of artillery, spread noiseless over the fields, the road, the common, and rolled, he said, blue and dim, to his very feet. As it cleared away he looked again for the soldiers, but they were vanished; he saw them no more. Mike, like a wise Daniel as he is, not only rehearsed the vision, but gave the interpretation thereof: it signifies, he intimated, bloodshed and civil conflict."

"Do you credit it, sir?" asked Sweeting.

"Do you, Davy? But come, Malone, why are you not off?"

"I am rather surprised, sir, you did not stay with Moore yourself: you like this kind of thing."

"So I should have done, had I not unfortunately happened to engage Boultby to sup with me on his way home from the Bible Society meeting at Nunnely. I promised to send you as my substitute; for which, by-the-bye, he did not thank me: he would much rather have had me than you, Peter. Should there be any real need of help, I shall join you: the mill-bell will give warning. Meantime, go; unless (turning suddenly to Messrs Sweeting and Donne)—unless Davy Sweeting or Joseph Donne prefers going. What do you say, gentlemen? The commission is an honourable one, not without the seasoning of a little real peril; for the country is in a queer state, as you all know, and Moore and his mill, and his machinery, are held in sufficient odium. There are chivalric sentiments, there is high-beating courage under those waistcoats of yours, I doubt not. Perhaps I am too partial to my favourite, Peter; little David shall be the champion, or spotless Joseph. Malone, you are but a great floundering Saul after all, good only to lend your armour: out with your fire-arms, fetch your shillelagh; it is there—in the corner."

With a significant grin, Malone produced his pistols, offering one to each of his brethren. They were not readily seized on: with graceful modesty, each gentleman retired a step from the presented weapon.

"I never touch them; I never did touch anything of the kind," said Mr Donne.

"I am almost a stranger to Mr Moore," murmured Sweeting.

"If you never touched a pistol, try the feel of it now, great satrap of Egypt. As to the little minstrel, he probably prefers encountering the Philistines with no other weapon than his flute. Get their hats, Peter; they'll both of 'em go."

"No, sir; no, Mr Helstone: my mother wouldn't like it," pleaded Sweeting.

"And I make it a rule never to get mixed up in affairs of the kind," observed Donne.

Helstone smiled sardonically; Malone laughed a horse-laugh. He then replaced his arms, took his hat and cudgel, and saying that "he never felt more in tune for a shindy in his life, and that he wished a score of greasy cloth-dressers might beat up Moore's quarters that night," he made his exit; clearing the stairs at a stride or two, and making the house shake with the bang of the front-door behind him.

Chapter ij.

THE WAGGONS.

THE evening was pitch-dark: star and moon were quenched in grey rain-clouds—grey they would have been by day, by night they looked sable. Malone was not a man given to close observation of Nature; her changes past, for the most part, unnoticed by him: he could walk miles on the most varying April day, and never see the beautiful dallying of earth and heaven; never mark when a sunbeam kissed the hill-tops, making them smile clear in green light, or when a shower wept over them, hiding their crests with the low-hanging, dishevelled tresses of a cloud. He did not, therefore, care to contrast the sky as it now appeared—a muffled, streaming vault, all black, save where, towards the east, the furnaces of Stilbro' iron-works threw a tremulous lurid shimmer on the horizon—with the same sky on an unclouded frosty night. He did not trouble himself to ask where the constellations and the planets were gone, or to regret the "black-blue" serenity of the air-ocean which those white islets stud; and which another ocean, of heavier and denser

element, now rolled below and concealed. He just doggedly pursued his way, leaning a little forward as he walked, and wearing his hat on the back of his head, as his Irish manner was. "Tramp, tramp," he went along the causeway, where the road boasted the privilege of such an accommodation; "splash, splash," through the mire-filled cart-ruts, where the flags were exchanged for soft mud. He looked but for certain land-marks: the spire of Briarfield church; further on, the lights of Redhouse. This was an inn; and when he reached it, the glow of a fire through a half-curtained window, a vision of glasses on a round table, and of revellers on an oaken settle, had nearly drawn aside the curate from his course. He thought longingly of a tumbler of whisky-and-water; in a strange place, he would instantly have realised the dream; but the company assembled in that kitchen were Mr Helstone's own parishioners; they all knew him. He sighed, and passed on.

The high road was now to be quitted, as the remaining distance to Hollow's Mill might be considerably reduced by a short cut across fields. These fields were level and monotonous; Malone took a direct course through them, jumping hedge and wall. He passed but one building here, and that seemed large and hall-like, though irregular: you could see a high gable, then a long front, then a low gable, then a thick, lofty stack of chimneys: there were some trees behind it. It was dark; not a candle shone from any window; it was absolutely still: the rain running from the eaves, and the rather wild, but very low whistle of the wind round the chimneys and through the boughs, were the sole sounds in its neighbourhood.

This building passed, the fields, hitherto flat, declined in a rapid descent: evidently a vale lay below, through which you could hear the water run. One light

glimmered in the depth: for that beacon Malone steered.

He came to a little white house—you could see it was white even through this dense darkness—and knocked at the door. A fresh-faced servant opened it; by the candle she held was revealed a narrow passage, terminating in a narrow stair. Two doors covered with crimson baize, a strip of crimson carpet down the steps, contrasted with light-coloured walls and white floor, made the little interior look clean and fresh.

"Mr Moore is at home, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, but he is not in."

"Not in! Where is he then?"

"At the mill—in the counting-house."

Here one of the crimson doors opened.

"Are the waggons come, Sarah?" asked a female voice, and a female head at the same time was apparent. It might not be the head of a goddess—indeed a screw of curl-paper on each side the temples quite forbade that supposition—but neither was it the head of a Gorgon; yet Malone seemed to take it in the latter light. Big as he was, he shrank bashfully back into the rain at the view thereof; and saying, "I'll go to him," hurried in seeming trepidation down a short lane, across an obscure yard, towards a huge black mill.

The work-hours were over; the "hands" were gone; the machinery was at rest; the mill shut up. Malone walked round it; somewhere in its great sooty flank he found another chink of light; he knocked at another door, using for the purpose the thick end of his shillelagh, with which he beat a rousing tattoo. A key turned; the door unclosed.

"Is it Joe Scott? What news of the waggons, Joe?"

"No—it's myself. Mr Helstone would send me."

"Oh! Mr Malone." The voice in uttering this

name had the slightest possible cadence of disappointment. After a moment's pause, it continued, politely, but a little formally—

"I beg you will come in, Mr Malone. I regret extremely Mr Helstone should have thought it necessary to trouble you so far; there was no necessity:—I told him so;—and on such a night—but walk forwards."

Through a dark apartment, of aspect undistinguishable, Malone followed the speaker into a light and bright room within: very light and bright indeed it seemed to eyes which, for the last hour, had been striving to penetrate the double darkness of night and fog; but except for its excellent fire, and for a lamp of elegant design and vivid lustre burning on a table, it was a very plain place. The boarded floor was carpetless; the three or four stiff-backed green-painted chairs seemed once to have furnished the kitchen of some farmhouse; a desk of strong, solid formation, the table aforesaid, and some framed sheets on the stone-coloured walls, bearing plans for building, for gardening, designs of machinery, &c., completed the furniture of the place.

Plain as it was, it seemed to satisfy Malone; who, when he had removed and hung up his wet surtout and hat, drew one of the rheumatic-looking chairs to the hearth, and set his knees almost within the bars of the red grate.

"Comfortable quarters you have here, Mr Moore; and all snug to yourself."

"Yes; but my sister would be glad to see you, if you would prefer stepping into the house."

"Oh, no! the ladies are best alone. I never was a lady's man. You don't mistake me for my friend Sweeting, do you, Mr Moore?"

"Sweeting!—which of them is that? The gentleman in the chocolate overcoat, or the little gentleman?"

"The little one;—he of Nunnely; the cavalier of

the Misses Sykes, with the whole six of whom he is in love, ha! ha!"

"Better be generally in love with all than specially with one, I should think, in that quarter."

"But he *is* specially in love with one besides, for when I and Donne urged him to make a choice amongst the fair bevy, he named—which do you think?"

With a queer, quiet smile, Mr Moore replied, "Dora, of course, or Harriet."

"Ha! ha! you've an excellent guess; but what made you hit on those two?"

"Because they are the tallest, the handsomest: and Dora, at least, is the stoutest; and as your friend Mr Sweeting is but a little, slight figure, I concluded that, according to a frequent rule in such cases, he preferred his contrast."

"You are right; Dora it is: but he has no chance, has he, Moore?"

"What has Mr Sweeting, besides his curacy?"

This question seemed to tickle Malone amazingly; he laughed for full three minutes before he answered it."

"What has Sweeting? Why, David has his harp, or flute, which comes to the same thing. He has a sort of pinchbeck watch; ditto, ring; ditto, eyeglass: that's what he has."

"How would he propose to keep Miss Sykes in gowns only?"

"Ha! ha! Excellent! I'll ask him that next time I see him. I'll roast him for his presumption: but no doubt he expects old Christopher Sykes would do something handsome. He is rich, is he not? They live in a large house."

"Sykes carries on an extensive concern."

"Therefore he must be wealthy, eh?"

"Therefore he must have plenty to do with his wealth; and in these times would be about as likely to

think of drawing money from the business to give dowries to his daughters as I should be to dream of pulling down the cottage there, and constructing on its ruins a house as large as Fieldhead."

"Do you know what I heard, Moore, the other day?"

"No: perhaps that I *was* about to effect some such change. Your Briarfield gossips are capable of saying that or sillier things."

"That you were going to take Fieldhead on a lease —I thought it looked a dismal place, by-the bye, to-night, as I passed it—and that it was your intention to settle a Miss Sykes there as mistress; to be married, in short, ha! ha! Now, which is it? Dora—I am sure: you said she was the handsomest."

"I wonder how often it has been settled that I was to be married since I came to Briarfield! They have assigned me every marriageable single woman by turns in the district. Now it was the two Misses Wynns—first the dark, then the light one. Now the red-haired Miss Armitage, then the mature Ann Pearson; at present you throw on my shoulders all the tribe of the Misses Sykes. On what grounds this gossip rests, God knows. I visit nowhere—I seek female society about as assiduously as you do, Mr Malone. If ever I go to Whinbury, it is only to give Sykes or Pearson a call in their counting-house; where our discussions run on other topics than matrimony, and our thoughts are occupied with other things than courtships, establishments, dowries: the cloth we can't sell, the hands we can't employ, the mills we can't run, the perverse course of events generally, which we cannot alter, fill our hearts, I take it, pretty well at present, to the tolerably complete exclusion of such figments as love-making, &c."

"I go along with you completely, Moore. If there is one notion I hate more than another, it is that of

marriage: I mean marriage in the vulgar weak sense, as a mere matter of sentiment; two beggarly fools agreeing to unite their indigence by some fantastic tie of feeling—humbug! But an advantageous connection, such as can be formed in consonance with dignity of views, and permanency of solid interests, is not so bad—eh?"

"No," responded Moore, in an absent manner; the subject seemed to have no interest for him: he did not pursue it. After sitting for some time gazing at the fire with a preoccupied air, he suddenly turned his head.

"Hark!" said he; "did you hear wheels?"

Rising, he went to the window, opened it, and listened. He soon closed it. "It is only the sound of the wind rising," he remarked, "and the rivulet a little swollen, rushing down the hollow. I expected those waggons at six; it is near nine now."

"Seriously, do you suppose that the putting up of this new machinery will bring you into danger?" inquired Malone. "Helstone seems to think it will."

"I only wish the machines—the frames were safe here, and lodged within the walls of this mill. Once put up I defy the framebreakers: let them only pay me a visit, and take the consequences; my mill is my castle."

"One despises such low scoundrels," observed Malone, in a profound vein of reflection. "I almost wish a party would call upon you to-night; but the road seemed extremely quiet as I came along: I saw nothing astir."

"You came by the Redhouse?"

"Yes."

"There would be nothing on that road; it is in the direction of Stilbro' the risk lies."

"And do you think there is risk?"

"What these fellows have done to others, they may do to me. There is only this difference; most of the manufacturers seem paralysed when they are attacked. Sykes, for instance, when his dressing-shop was set on fire and burned to the ground, when the cloth was torn from his tenters and left in shreds in the field, took no steps to discover or punish the miscreants: he gave up as tamely as a rabbit under the jaws of a ferret. Now I, if I know myself, should stand by my trade, my mill, and my machinery."

"Helstone says these three are your gods; that the 'Orders in Council' are with you another name for the seven deadly sins; that Castlereagh is your Antichrist, and the war-party his legions."

"Yes; I abhor all these things because they ruin me: they stand in my way: I cannot get on. I cannot execute my plans because of them: I see myself baffled at every turn by their untoward effects."

"But you are rich and thriving, Moore?"

"I am very rich in cloth I cannot sell: you should step into my warehouse yonder, and observe how it is piled to the roof with pieces. Roakes and Pearson are in the same condition: America used to be their market, but the Orders in Council have cut that off."

Malone did not seem prepared to carry on briskly a conversation of this sort; he began to knock the heels of his boots together, and to yawn.

"And then to think," continued Mr Moore, who seemed too much taken up with the current of his own thoughts to note the symptoms of his guest's *ennui*,— "to think that these ridiculous gossips of Whinbury and Briarfield will keep pestering one about being married! As if there was nothing to be done in life but to 'pay attention,' as they say, to some young lady, and then to go to church with her, and then to start on a bridal tour, and then to run through a round of visits, and

then, I suppose, to be 'having a family,'—Oh, que le diable emporte!"—He broke off the aspiration into which he was launching with a certain energy, and added, more calmly—"I believe women talk and think only of these things, and they naturally fancy men's minds similarly occupied."

"Of course—of course," assented Malone; "but never mind them." And he whistled, looked impatiently round, and seemed to feel a great want of something. This time Moore caught, and, it appeared, comprehended his demonstrations.

"Mr Malone," said he, "you must require refreshment after your wet walk: I forget hospitality."

"Not at all," rejoined Malone; but he looked as if the right nail was at last hit on the head, nevertheless. Moore rose and opened a cupboard.

"It is my fancy," said he, "to have every convenience within myself, and not to be dependent on the feminity in the cottage yonder for every mouthful I eat or every drop I drink. I often spend the evening and sup here alone, and sleep with Joe Scott in the mill. Sometimes I am my own watchman; I require little sleep, and it pleases me on a fine night to wander for an hour or two with my musket about the hollow. Mr Malone, can you cook a mutton-chop?"

"Try me: I've done it hundreds of times at college."

"There's a dishful, then, and there's the gridiron. Turn them quickly; you know the secret of keeping the juices in?"

"Never fear me—you shall see. Hand a knife and fork, please."

The curate turned up his coat-cuffs, and applied himself to the cookery with vigour. The manufacturer placed on the table plates, a loaf of bread, a black bottle, and two tumblers. He then produced a small

copper kettle—still from the same well-stored recess, his cupboard—filled it with water from a large stone jar in a corner, set it on the fire beside the hissing gridiron, got lemons, sugar, and a small china punch-bowl; but while he was brewing the punch, a tap at the door called him away.

"Is it you, Sarah?"

"Yes, sir. Will you come to supper, please, sir?"

"No; I shall not be in to-night: I shall sleep in the mill. So lock the doors, and tell your mistress to go to bed." He returned.

"You have your household in proper order," observed Malone approvingly, as, with his fine face ruddy as the embers over which he bent, he assiduously turned the mutton-chops. "You are not under petticoat government, like poor Sweeting; a man—whew!—how the fat spits!—it has burnt my hand—destined to be ruled by women. Now you and I, Moore—there's a fine brown one for you, and full of gravy—you and I will have no grey mares in our stables when we marry."

"I don't know—I never think about it: if the grey mare is handsome and tractable, why not?"

"The chops are done: is the punch brewed?"

"There is a glassful; taste it. When Joe Scott and his minions return they shall have a share of this, provided they bring home the frames intact."

Malone waxed very exultant over the supper: he laughed aloud at trifles; made bad jokes and applauded them himself; and, in short, grew unmeaningly noisy. His host, on the contrary, remained quiet as before. It is time, reader, that you should have some idea of the appearance of this same host: I must endeavour to sketch him as he sits at table.

He is what you would probably call, at first view, rather a strange-looking man; for he is thin, dark, sallow; very foreign of aspect, with shadowy hair carelessly

streaking his forehead: it appears that he spends but little time at his toilette, or he would arrange it with more taste. He seems unconscious that his features are fine, that they have a southern symmetry, clearness, regularity in their chiseling; nor does a spectator become aware of this advantage till he has examined him well, for an anxious countenance, and a hollow, somewhat haggard, outline of face disturb the idea of beauty with one of care. His eyes are large, and grave, and grey; their expression is intent and meditative, rather searching than soft, rather thoughtful than genial. When he parts his lips in a smile his physiognomy is agreeable—not that it is frank or cheerful even then, but you feel the influence of a certain sedate charm, suggestive, whether truly or delusively, of a considerate, perhaps a kind nature; of feelings that may wear well at home; patient, forbearing, possibly faithful feelings. He is still young—not more than thirty; his stature is tall, his figure slender. His manner of speaking displeases: he has an outlandish accent, which, notwithstanding a studied carelessness of pronunciation and diction, grates on a British, and especially on a Yorkshire ear.

Mr Moore, indeed, was but half a Briton, and scarcely that. He came of a foreign ancestry by the mother's side, and was himself born and partly reared on a foreign soil. A hybrid in nature, it is probable he had a hybrid's feeling on many points—patriotism for one; it is likely that he was unapt to attach himself to parties, to sects, even to climes and customs; it is not impossible that he had a tendency to isolate his individual person from any community amidst which his lot might temporarily happen to be thrown, and that he felt it to be his best wisdom to push the interests of Robert Gérard Moore to the exclusion of philanthropic consideration for general interests: with which he regarded

the said Gérard Moore as in a great measure disconnected. Trade was Mr Moore's hereditary calling: the Gérards of Antwerp had been merchants for two centuries back. Once they had been wealthy merchants; but the uncertainties, the involvements of business had come upon them; disastrous speculations had loosened by degrees the foundations of their credit; the house had ostod on a tottering base for a dozen years; and at last, in the shock of the French Revolution, it had rushed down a total ruin. In its fall was involved the English and Yorkshire firm of Moore, closely connected with the Antwerp house; and of which one of the partners, resident in Antwerp, Robert Moore, had married Hortense Gérard, with the prospect of his bride inheriting her father Constantine Gérard's share in the business. She inherited, as we have seen, but his share in the liabilities of the firm; and these liabilities, though duly set aside by a composition with creditors, some said her son Robert accepted, in his turn, as a legacy; and that he aspired one day to discharge them, and to rebuild the fallen house of Gérard and Moore on a scale at least equal to its former greatness. It was even supposed that he took by-past circumstances much to heart; and if a childhood passed at the side of a saturnine mother, under foreboding of coming evil, and a manhood drenched and blighted by the pitiless descent of the storm, could painfully impress the mind, *his* probably was impressed in no golden characters.

If, however, he had a great end of restoration in view, it was not in his power to employ great means for its attainment; he was obliged to be content with the day of small things. When he came to Yorkshire, he—whose ancestors had owned warehouses in this seaport, and factories in that inland town, had possessed their town-house and their country-seat—saw no way open to him but to rent a cloth-mill, in an out-of-the-way

nook of an out-of-the-way district; to take a cottage adjoining it for his residence, and to add to his possessions, as pasture for his horse, and space for his cloth-tenters, a few acres of the steep rugged land that lined the hollow through which his mill-stream brawled. All this he held at a somewhat high rent (for these war times were hard, and everything was dear), of the trustees of the Fieldhead estate, then the property of a minor.

At the time this history commences, Robert Moore had lived but two years in the district; during which period he had at least proved himself possessed of the quality of activity. The dingy cottage was converted into a neat, tasteful residence. Of part of the rough land he had made garden-ground, which he cultivated with singular, even with Flemish, exactness and care. As to the mill, which was an old structure, and fitted up with old machinery, now become inefficient and out of date, he had from the first evinced the strongest contempt for all its arrangements and appointments: his aim had been to effect a radical reform, which he had executed as fast as his very limited capital would allow; and the narrowness of that capital, and consequent check on his progress, was a restraint which galled his spirit sorely. Moore ever wanted to push on: "Forward" was the device stamped upon his soul; but poverty curbed him: sometimes (figuratively) he foamed at the mouth when the reins were drawn very tight.

In this state of feeling, it is not to be expected that he would deliberate much as to whether his advance was or was not prejudicial to others. Not being a native, nor for any length of time a resident of the neighbourhood, he did not sufficiently care when the new inventions threw the old workpeople out of employ: he never asked himself where those to whom he no longer paid weekly wages found daily bread;

and in this negligence he only resembled thousands besides, on whom the starving poor of Yorkshire seemed to have a closer claim.

The period of which I write was an overshadowed one in British history, and especially in the history of the northern provinces. War was then at its height. Europe was all involved therein. England, if not weary, was worn with long resistance: yes, and half her people were weary too, and cried out for peace on any terms. National honour was become a mere empty name, of no value in the eyes of many, because their sight was dim with famine; and for a morsel of meat they would have sold their birthright.

The "Orders in Council," provoked by Napoleon's Milan and Berlin decrees, and forbidding neutral powers to trade with France, had, by offending America, cut off the principal market of the Yorkshire woollen trade, and brought it consequently to the verge of ruin. Minor foreign markets were glutted, and would receive no more: the Brazils, Portugal, Sicily, were all overstocked by nearly two years' consumption. At this crisis, certain inventions in machinery were introduced into the staple manufactures of the north, which, greatly reducing the number of hands necessary to be employed, threw thousands out of work, and left them without legitimate means of sustaining life. A bad harvest supervened. Distress reached its climax. Endurance, overgoaded, stretched the hand of fraternity to sedition. The throes of a sort of moral earthquake were felt heaving under the hills of the northern counties. But, as is usual in such cases, nobody took much notice. When a food-riot broke out in a manufacturing town, when a gig-mill was burnt to the ground, or a manufacturer's house was attacked, the furniture thrown into the streets, and the family forced to flee for their lives, some local measures were or were not taken by the

local magistracy; a ringleader was detected, or more frequently suffered to elude detection; newspaper paragraphs were written on the subject, and there the thing stopped. As to the sufferers, whose sole inheritance was labour, and who had lost that inheritance —who could not get work, and consequently could not get wages, and consequently could not get bread—they were left to suffer on; perhaps inevitably left: it would not do to stop the progress of invention, to damage science by discouraging its improvements; the war could not be terminated, efficient relief could not be raised: there was no help then; so the unemployed underwent their destiny—ate the bread and drank the waters of affliction.

Misery generates hate: these sufferers hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them: they hated the buildings which contained those machines; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings. In the parish of Briarfield, with which we have at present to do, Hollow's Mill was the place held most abominable; Gérard Moore, in his double character of semi-foreigner and thoroughgoing progressist, the man most abominated. And it perhaps rather agreed with Moore's temperament than otherwise to be generally hated; especially when he believed the thing for which he was hated a right and an expedient thing; and it was with a sense of warlike excitement he, on this night, sat in his counting-house waiting the arrival of his frame-laden waggons. Malone's coming and company were, it may be, most unwelcome to him: he would have preferred sitting alone; for he liked a silent, sombre, unsafe solitude: his watchman's musket would have been company enough for him; the full-flowing beck in the den would have delivered continuously the discourse most genial to his ear.

With the queerest look in the world, had the manufacturer for some ten minutes been watching the Irish curate, as the latter made free with the punch; when suddenly that steady grey eye changed, as if another vision came between it and Malone. Moore raised his head.

"Chut!" he said, in his French fashion, as Malone made a noise with his glass. He listened a moment, then rose, put his hat on, and went out at the counting-house door.

The night was still, dark, and stagnant: the water yet rushed on full and fast: its flow almost seemed a flood in the utter silence. Moore's ear, however, caught another sound—very distant, but yet dissimilar—broken and rugged: in short, a sound of heavy wheels crunching a stony road. He returned to the counting-house and lit a lantern, with which he walked down the mill-yard, and proceeded to open the gates. The big waggons were coming on; the dray-horses' huge hoofs were heard splashing in the mud and water. Moore hailed them.

"Hey, Joe Scott! Is all right?"

Probably Joe Scott was yet at too great a distance to hear the inquiry; he did not answer it.

"Is all right, I say?" again asked Moore when the elephant-like leader's nose almost touched his.

Some one jumped out from the foremost waggon into the road; a voice cried aloud, "Ay, ay, divil, all's raight! We've smashed 'em."

And there was a run. The waggons stood still: they were now deserted.

"Joe Scott!" No Joe Scott answered. "Murgatroyd! Pighills! Sykes!" No reply. Mr Moore lifted his lantern, and looked into the vehicles; there was neither man nor machinery: they were empty and abandoned.

Now Mr Moore loved his machinery: he had risked the last of his capital on the purchase of these frames and shears which to-night had been expected; speculations most important to his interests depended on the results to be wrought by them: where were they?

The words "we've smashed 'em!" rung in his ears. How did the catastrophe affect him? By the light of the lantern he held, were his features visible, relaxing to a singular smile: the smile the man of determined spirit wears when he reaches a juncture in his life where this determined spirit is to feel a demand on its strength: when the strain is to be made, and the faculty must bear or break. Yet he remained silent, and even motionless: for at the instant he neither knew what to say nor what to do. He placed the lantern on the ground, and stood with his arms folded, gazing down and reflecting.

An impatient trampling of one of the horses made him presently look up; his eye in the moment caught the gleam of something white attached to a part of the harness. Examined by the light of the lantern, this proved to be a folded paper—a billet. It bore no address without; within was the superscription—

"To the Divil of Hollow's Miln."

We will not copy the rest of the orthography, which was very peculiar, but translate it into legible English. It ran thus:—

"Your hellish machinery is shivered to smash on Stilbro' Moor, and your men are lying bound hand and foot in a ditch by the roadside. Take this as a warning from men that are starving, and have starving wives and children to go home to when they have done this deed. If you get new machines, or if you otherwise go on as you have done you shall hear from us again. Beware!"

"Hear from you again? Yes; I'll hear from you again, and you shall hear from me. I'll speak to you

directly: on Stilbro' Moor you shall hear from me in a moment."

Having led the waggons within the gates, he hastened towards the cottage. Opening the door, he spoke a few words quickly but quietly to two females who ran to meet him in the passage. He calmed the seeming alarm of one by a brief palliative account of what had taken place; to the other he said, "Go into the mill, Sarah —there is the key—and ring the mill-bell as loud as you can: afterwards you will get another lantern and help me to light up the front."

Returning to his horses, he unharnessed, fed, and stabled them with equal speed and care, pausing occasionally while so occupied, as if to listen for the mill-bell. It clanged out presently, with irregular but loud and alarming din: the hurried agitated peal seemed more urgent than if the summons had been steadily given by a practised hand. On that still night, at that unusual hour, it was heard a long way round: the guests in the kitchen of the Redhouse were startled by the clangour; and declaring that "there must be summat more nor common to do at Hollow's Miln," they called for lanterns, and hurried to the spot in a body. And scarcely had they thronged into the yard with their gleaming lights, when the tramp of horses was heard, and a little man in a shovel hat, sitting erect on the back of a shaggy pony, "rode lightly in," followed by an aide-de-camp mounted on a larger steed.

Mr Moore, meantime, after stabling his dray-horses, had saddled his hackney: and, with the aid of Sarah, the servant, lit up his mill; whose wide and long front now glared one great illumination, throwing a sufficient light on the yard to obviate all fear of confusion arising from obscurity. Already a deep hum of voices became audible. Mr Malone had at length issued from the counting-house, previously taking the precaution to dip

his head and face in the stone water-jar; and this precaution, together with the sudden alarm, had nearly restored to him the possession of those senses which the punch had partially scattered. He stood with his hat on the back of his head, and his shillelagh grasped in his dexter fist, answering much at random the questions of the newly-arrived party from the Redhouse. Mr Moore now appeared, and was immediately confronted by the shovel hat and the shaggy pony.

"Well, Moore, what is your business with us! I thought you would want us to-night: me and the hetman here (patting his pony's neck), and Tom and his charger. When I heard your mill-bell, I could sit still no longer, so I left Boultby to finish his supper alone: but where is the enemy? I do not see a mask or a smutted face present; and there is not a pane of glass broken in your windows. Have you had an attack, or do you expect one?"

"Oh, not at all! I have neither had one nor expect one," answered Moore coolly. "I only ordered the bell to be rung because I want two or three neighbours to stay here in the Hollow while I and a couple or so more go over to Stilbro' Moor."

"To Stilbro' Moor! What to do? To meet the waggons?"

"The waggons are come home an hour ago."

"Then all's right. What more would you have?"

"They came home empty: and Joe Scott and company are left on the moor, and so are the frames. Read that scrawl."

Mr Helstone received and perused the document of which the contents have before been given.

"Hum! They've only served you as they serve others. But, however, the poor fellows in the ditch will be expecting help with some impatience: this is a wet night for such a berth. I and Tom will go with

you; Malone may stay behind and take care of the mill: what is the matter with him? His eyes seem starting out of his head."

"He has been eating a mutton-chop."

"Indeed! Peter Augustus, be on your guard. Eat no more mutton-chops to-night. You are left here in command of these premises: an honourable post!"

"Is anybody to stay with me?"

"As many of the present assemblage as choose. My lads, how many of you will remain here, and how many will go a little way with me and Mr Moore on the Stilbro' road, to meet some men who have been waylaid and assaulted by frame-breakers?"

The small number of three volunteered to go; the rest preferred staying behind. As Mr Moore mounted his horse, the Rector asked him in a low voice whether he had locked up the mutton-chops, so that Peter Augustus could not get at them? The manufacturer nodded an affirmative, and the rescue-party set out.

Chapter iij.

MR YORKE.

CHEERFULNESS, it would appear, is a matter which depends fully as much on the state of things within, as on the state of things without and around us. I make this trite remark, because I happen to know that Messrs Helstone and Moore trotted forth from the mill-yard gates, at the head of their very small company, in the best possible spirits. When a ray from a lantern (the three pedestrians of the party carried each one) fell on Mr Moore's face, you could see an unusual, because a lively spark, dancing in his eyes, and a new-found

vivacity mantling on his dark physiognomy; and when the Rector's visage was illuminated, his hard features were revealed all agrin and ashine with glee. Yet a drizzling night, a somewhat perilous expedition, you would think were not circumstances calculated to enliven those exposed to the wet and engaged in the adventure. If any member or members of the crew who had been at work on Stilbro' Moor had caught a view of this party, they would have had great pleasure in shooting either of the leaders from behind a wall: and the leaders knew this; and, the fact is, being both men of steely nerves and steady-beating hearts, were elate with the knowledge.

I am aware, reader, and you need not remind me, that it is a dreadful thing for a parson to be warlike: I am aware that he should be a man of peace. I have some faint outline of an idea of what a clergyman's mission is amongst mankind, and I remember distinctly whose servant he is: whose message he delivers, whose example he should follow: yet, with all this, if you are a parson-hater, you need not expect me to go along with you every step of your dismal, downward-tending, unchristian road; you need not expect me to join in your deep anathemas, at once so narrow and so sweeping —in your poisonous rancour, so intense and so absurd, against "the cloth;" to lift up my eyes and hands with a Supplehough, or to inflate my lungs with a Barraclough, in horror and denunciation of the diabolical rector of Briarfield.

He was not diabolical at all. The evil simply was—he had missed his vocation: he should have been a soldier, and circumstances had made him a priest. For the rest, he was a conscientious, hard-headed, hard-handed, brave, stern, implacable, faithful little man: a man almost without sympathy, ungentle, prejudiced, and rigid: but a man true to principle—honourable, sagacious, and sincere. It

seems to me, reader, that you cannot always cut out men to fit their profession, and that you ought not to curse them because that profession sometimes hangs on them ungracefully: nor will I curse Helstone, clerical cossack as he was. Yet he *was* cursed, and by many of his own parishioners, as by others he was adored: which is the frequent fate of men who show partiality in friendship and bitterness in enmity; who are equally attached to principles and adherent to prejudices.

Helstone and Moore, being both in excellent spirits, and united for the present in one cause, you would expect that, as they rode side by side, they would converse amicably. Oh, no! These two men, of hard bilious natures both, rarely came into contact but they chafed each other's moods. Their frequent bone of contention was the war. Helstone was a high Tory (there were Tories in those days), and Moore was a bitter Whig—a Whig, at least, as far as opposition to the war-party was concerned; that being the question which affected his own interest; and only on that question did he profess any British politics at all. He liked to infuriate Helstone by declaring his belief in the invincibility of Bonaparte; by taunting England and Europe with the impotence of their efforts to withstand him; and by coolly advancing the opinion that it was as well to yield to him soon as late, since he must in the end crush every antagonist, and reign supreme.

Helstone could not bear these sentiments: it was only on the consideration of Moore being a sort of outcast and alien, and having but half measure of British blood to temper the foreign gall which corroded his veins, that he brought himself to listen to them without indulging the wish he felt to cane the speaker. Another thing, too, somewhat allayed his disgust; namely, a fellow-feeling for the dogged tone with which these opinions were asserted, and a respect for the consistency of Moore's crabbed contumacy.

As the party turned into the Stilbro' road, they met what little wind there was; the rain dashed in their faces. Moore had been fretting his companion previously, and now, braced up by the raw breeze, and perhaps irritated by the sharp drizzle, he began to goad him.

"Does your Peninsular news please you still?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" was the surly demand of the Rector.

"I mean have you still faith in that Baal of a Lord Wellington?"

"And what do you mean now?"

"Do you still believe that this wooden-faced and pebble-hearted idol of England has power to send fire down from heaven to consume the French holocaust you want to offer up?"

"I believe Wellington will flog Bonaparte's marshals into the sea, the day it pleases him to lift his arm."

"But, my dear sir, you can't be serious in what you say. Bonaparte's marshals are great men, who act under the guidance of an omnipotent master-spirit; your Wellington is the most hum-drum of commonplace martinets, whose slow mechanical movements are further cramped by an ignorant home government."

"Wellington is the soul of England. Wellington is the right champion of a good cause; the fit representative of a powerful, a resolute, a sensible, and an honest nation."

"Your good cause, as far as I understand it, is simply the restoration of that filthy, feeble Ferdinand, to a throne which he disgraced; your fit representative of an honest people is a dull-witted drover, acting for a duller-witted farmer; and against these are arrayed victorious supremcy and invincible genius."

"Against legitimacy is arrayed usurpation: against

modest, single-minded, righteous, and brave resistance to encroachment, is arrayed boastful, double-tongued, selfish, and treacherous ambition to possess. God defend the right!"

"God often defends the powerful."

"What! I suppose the handful of Israelites standing dryshod on the Asiatic side of the Red Sea, was more powerful than the host of the Egyptians drawn up on the African side? Were they more numerous? Were they better appointed? Were they more mighty, in a word—eh? Don't speak, or you'll tell a lie, Moore; you know you will. They were a poor overwrought band of bondsmen. Tyrants had oppressed them through four hundred years; a feeble mixture of women and children diluted their thin ranks; their masters, who roared to follow them through the divided flood, were a set of pampered Ethiops, about as strong and brutal as the lions of Libya. They were armed, horsed, and charioted, the poor Hebrew wanderers were afoot; few of them, it is likely, had better weapons than their shepherds' crooks, or their masons' building-tools; their meek and mighty leader himself had only his rod. But bethink you, Robert Moore, right was with them; the God of battles was on their side. Crime and the lost archangel generalled the ranks of Pharaoh, and which triumphed? We know that well: 'The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore;' yea, 'the depths covered them, they sank to the bottom as a stone.' The right hand of the Lord became glorious in power; the right hand of the Lord dashed in pieces the enemy!"

"You are all right; only you forget the true parallel: France is Israel, and Napoleon is Moses. Europe, with her old overgorged empires and rotten dynasties, is corrupt Egypt: gallant France is the Twelve Tribes,

and her fresh and vigorous Usurper the Shepherd of Horeb."

"I scorn to answer you."

Moore accordingly answered himself; at least he subjoined to what he had just said an additional observation in a lower voice.

"Oh, in Italy he was as great as any Moses! He was the right thing there; fit to head and organise measures for the regeneration of nations. It puzzles me to this day how the conqueror of Lodi should have condescended to become an emperor, a vulgar, a stupid humbug; and still more how a people, who had once called themselves republicans, should have sunk again to the grade of mere slaves. I despise France! If England had gone as far on the march of civilisation as France did, she would hardly have retreated so shamelessly."

"You don't mean to say that besotted Imperial France is any worse than bloody republican France?" demanded Helstone fiercely.

"I mean to say nothing: but I can think what I please, you know, Mr Helstone, both about France and England; and about revolutions, and regicides, and restorations in general; and about the divine right of kings, which you often stickle for in your sermons, and the duty of non-resistance, and the sanity of war, and"——

Mr Moore's sentence was here cut short by the rapid rolling up of a gig, and its sudden stoppage in the middle of the road; both he and the Rector had been too much occupied with their discourse to notice its approach till it was close upon them.

"Nah, maister, did th' waggons hit home?" demanded a voice from the vehicle.

"Can that be Joe Scott?"

"Ay, ay!" returned another voice; for the gig

contained two persons, as was seen by the glimmer of its lamp: the men with the lanterns had now fallen into the rear, or rather, the equestrians of the rescue-party had outridden the pedestrians. "Ay, Mr Moore, it's Joe Scott. I'm bringing him back to you in a bonny pickle. I fand him on the top of the moor yonder, him and three others. What will you give me for restoring him to you?"

"Why, my thanks, I believe: for I could better have afforded to lose a better man. That is you, I suppose, Mr Yorke, by your voice?"

"Ay, lad, it's me. I was coming home from Stilbro' market, and just as I got to the middle of the moor, and was whipping on as swift as the wind (for these, they say, are not safe times, thanks to a bad government!) I heard a groan. I pulled up: some would have whipt on faster; but I've naught to fear, that I know of. I don't believe there's a lad in these parts would harm me; at least I'd give them as good as I got if they offered to do it. I said, 'Is there aught wrong anywhere?'—'Deed is there,' somebody says, speaking out of the ground, like. 'What's to do? be sharp, and tell me,' I ordered.—'Nobbut four on us ligging in a ditch,' says Joe, as quiet as could be. I tell'd 'em, more shame to 'em, and bid them get up and move on, or I'd lend them a lick of the gig-whip; for my notion was, they were all fresh.—'We d ha' done that an hour sin'; but we're teed wi' a bit o' band,' says Joe. So in a while I got down and loosed 'em wi' my penknife, and Scott would ride wi' me, to tell me all how it happened; and t' others are coming on as fast as their feet will bring them."

"Well, I am greatly obliged to you, Mr Yorke."

"Are you, my lad? you know you're not. However, here are the rest approaching. And here, by the Lord! is another set with lights in their pitchers, like

the army of Gideon; and as we've th' parson wi' us—good evening, Mr Helstone—we'se do."

Mr Helstone returned the salutation of the individual in the gig very stiffly indeed. That individual proceeded—

"We're eleven strong men, and there's both horses and chariots amang us. If we could only fall in wi' some of these starved ragamuffins of frame-breakers, we could win a grand victory; we could iv'ry one be a Wellington—that would please ye, Mr Helstone; and sich paragraphs as we could contrive for t' papers! Briarfield suld be famous: but we'se hev a column and a half i' th' *Stilbro' Courier* ower this job, as it is, I daresay: I'se expect no less."

"And I'll promise you no less, Mr Yorke, for I'll write the article myself," returned the Rector.

"To be sure! sartainly! And mind ye recommend weel that them 'at brake t' bits o' frames, and teed Joe Scott's legs wi' band, suld be hung without benefit o' clergy. It's a hanging matter, or suld be; no doubt o' that."

"If I judged them, I'd give them short shrift!" cried Moore; "but I mean to let them quite alone this bout, to give them rope enough, certain that in the end they will hang themselves."

"Let them alone, will ye, Moore? Do you promise that?"

"Promise? No. All I mean to say is, I shall give myself no particular trouble to catch them; but if one falls in my way"—

"You'll snap him up, of course: only you would rather they would do something worse than merely stop a waggon before you reckon with them. Well, we'll say no more on the subject at present. Here we are at my door, gentlemen, and I hope you and the men will step in: you will none of you be the worse of a little refreshment."

Moore and Helstone opposed this proposition as unnecessary; it was, however, pressed on them so courteously, and the night, besides, was so inclement, and the gleam from the muslin-curtained windows of the house before which they had halted, looking so inviting, that at length they yielded. Mr Yorke, after having alighted from his gig, which he left in charge of a man who issued from an outbuilding on his arrival, led the way in.

It will have been remarked that Mr Yorke varied a little in his phraseology; now he spoke broad Yorkshire, and anon he expressed himself in very pure English. His manner seemed liable to equal alternations; he could be polite and affable, and he could be blunt and rough. His station then you could not easily determine by his speech and demeanour; perhaps the appearance of his residence may decide it.

The men he recommended to take the kitchen way, saying that he would "see them served wi' summat to taste presently." The gentlemen were ushered in at the front entrance. They found themselves in a matted hall, lined almost to the ceiling with pictures, through this they were conducted to a large parlour, with a magnificent fire in the grate; the most cheerful of rooms it appeared as a whole, and when you came to examine details, the enlivening effect was not diminished. There was no splendour, but there was taste everywhere,—unusual taste,—the taste, you would have said, of a travelled man, a scholar, and a gentleman. A series of Italian views decked the walls; each of these was a specimen of true art; a connoisseur had selected them: they were genuine and valuable. Even by candlelight, the bright clear skies, the soft distances, with blue air quivering between the eye and the hills, the fresh tints, and well-massed lights and shadows, charmed the view. The subjects were all pastoral, the scenes were all sunny. There was a guitar and some music on a sofa; there

were cameos, beautiful miniatures; a set of Grecian-looking vases on the mantelpiece; there were books well arranged in two elegant bookcases.

Mr Yorke bade his guests be seated; he then rang for wine; to the servant who brought it he gave hospitable orders for the refreshment of the men in the kitchen. The Rector remained standing; he seemed not to like his quarters; he would not touch the wine his host offered him.

"E'en as you will," remarked Mr Yorke. "I reckon you're thinking of Eastern customs, Mr Helstone, and you'll not eat nor drink under my roof, feard we suld be forced to be friends; but I am not so particular or superstitious. You might sup the contents of that decanter, and you might give me a bottle of the best in your own cellar, and I'd hold myself free to oppose you at every turn still,—in every vestry-meeting and justice-meeting where we encountered one another."

"It is just what I should expect of you, Mr Yorke."

"Does it agree wi' ye now, Mr Helstone, to be riding out after rioters, of a wet night, at your age?"

"It always agrees with me to be doing my duty; and in this case my duty is a thorough pleasure. To hunt down vermin is a noble occupation,—fit for an archbishop."

"Fit for ye, at ony rate: but where's t' curate? He's happen gone to visit some poor body in a sick gird, or he's happen hunting down vermin in another direction."

"He is doing garrison-duty at Hollow's Mill."

"You left him a sup o' wine, I hope, Bob (turning to Mr Moore), to keep his courage up?"

He did not pause for an answer, but continued, quickly—still addressing Moore, who had thrown himself into an old-fashioned chair by the fireside—"Move it, Robert! Get up, my lad! That place is mine.

Take the sofa, or three other chairs, if you will, but not this; it belangs to me, and nob'dy else."

"Why are you so particular to that chair, Mr Yorke?" asked Moore, lazily vacating the place in obedience to order and h

"My father wa[illegible]fore me, and that's all t' answer I sall gie thee; and it's as good a reason as Mr Helstone can give for the main feck o' his notions."

"Moore, are you ready to go?" inquired the Rector.

"Nay; Robert's not ready; or rather, I'm not ready to part wi' him: he's an ill lad, and wants correcting."

"Why, sir? What have I done?"

"Made thyself enemies on every hand."

"What do I care for that? What difference does it make to me whether your Yorkshire louts hate me or like me?"

"Ay, there it is. The lad is a mak' of an alien amang us: his father would never have talked i' that way. Go back to Antwerp, where you were born and bred, mauvaise tête!"

"Mauvaise tête vous-même; je ne fais que mon devoir: quant à vos lourdauds de paysans, je m'en moque!"

"En ravanche mon garçon, nos lourdauds de paysans se moqueront de toi; sois en certain," replied Yorke, speaking with nearly as pure a French accent as Gérard Moore.

"C'est bon! c'est bon! Et puisque cela m'est égal, que mes amis ne s'en inquiètent pas."

"Tes amis! Où sont-ils, tes amis?"

"Je fais écho où sont-ils? et je suis fort aise que l'écho seul y répond. Au diable les amis! Je me souviens encore du moment où mon père et mes oncles Gérard appellèrent autour d'eux leurs amis, et Dieu sait si les amis se sont empressés d'accourir à leur secours!

Tenez, M. Yorke, ce mot, ami, m'irrite trop; ne m'en parlez plus."

"Comme tu voudras."

And here Mr Yorke held his peace; and while he sits leaning back in his three-cornered, carved oak chair, I will snatch my opportunity to sketch the portrait of this French-speaking Yorkshire gentleman.

Chapter 16.

MR YORKE (*continued*).

A YORKSHIRE gentleman he was, par excellence, in every point. About fifty-five years old, but looking at first sight still older, for his hair was silver white. His forehead was broad, not high; his face fresh and hale; the harshness of the north was seen in his features, as it was heard in his voice; every trait was thoroughly English, not a Norman line anywhere; it was an inelegant, unclassic, unaristocratic mould of visage. Fine people would perhaps have called it vulgar; sensible people would have termed it characteristic; shrewd people would have delighted in it for the pith, sagacity, intelligence—the rude, yet real originality marked in every lineament, latent in every furrow. But it was an indocile, a scornful, and a sarcastic face; the face of a man difficult to lead, and impossible to drive. His stature was rather tall, and he was well-made and wiry, and had a stately integrity of port; there was not a suspicion of the clown about him anywhere.

I did not find it easy to sketch Mr Yorke's person, but it is more difficult to indicate his mind. If you expect to be treated to a Perfection, reader, or even to a benevolent, philanthropic old gentleman in him, you

are mistaken. He has spoken with some sense, and with some good feeling, to Mr Moore; but you are not thence to conclude that he always spoke and thought justly and kindly.

Mr Yorke, in the first place, was without the organ of Veneration—a great want, and which throws a man wrong on every point where veneration is required. Secondly, he was without the organ of Comparison—a deficiency which strips a man of sympathy; and, thirdly, he had too little of the organs of Benevolence and Ideality, which took the glory and softness from his nature, and for him diminished those divine qualities throughout the universe.

The want of veneration made him intolerant to those above him: kings and nobles and priests, dynasties and parliaments and establishments, with all their doings, most of their enactments, their forms, their rights, their claims, were to him an abomination—all rubbish; he found no use or pleasure in them, and believed it would be clear gain, and no damage to the world, if its high places were razed, and their occupants crushed in the fall. The want of veneration, too, made him dead at heart to the electric delight of admiring what is admirable; it dried up a thousand pure sources of enjoyment; it withered a thousand vivid pleasures. He was not irreligious, though a member of no sect; but his religion could not be that of one who knows how to venerate. He believed in God and heaven; but his God and heaven were those of a man in whom awe, imagination, and tenderness lack.

The weakness of his powers of comparison made him inconsistent; while he professed some excellent general doctrines of mutual toleration and forbearance, he cherished towards certain classes a bigoted antipathy: he spoke of "parsons" and all who belonged to parsons, of "lords" and the appendages of lords, with a harsh-

ness, sometimes an insolence, as unjust as it was insufferable. He could not place himself in the position of those he vituperated; he could not compare their errors with their temptations, their defects with their disadvantages; he could not realise the effect of such and such circumstances on himself similarly situated, and he would often express the most ferocious and tyrannical wishes regarding those who had acted, as he thought, ferociously and tyrannically. To judge by his threats, he would have employed arbitrary, even cruel, means to advance the cause of freedom and equality. Equality—yes, Mr Yorke talked about equality, but at heart he was a proud man: very friendly to his workpeople, very good to all who were beneath him, and submitted quietly to be beneath him, but haughty as Beelzebub to whomsoever the world deemed (for he deemed no man) his superior. Revolt was in his blood: he could not bear control; his father, his grandfather before him, could not bear it, and his children after him never could.

The want of general benevolence made him very impatient of imbecility, and of all faults which grated on his strong, shrewd nature: it left no check to his cutting sarcasm. As he was not merciful, he would sometimes wound and wound again, without noticing how much he hurt, or caring how deep he thrust.

As to the paucity of ideality in his mind, that can scarcely be called a fault: a fine ear for music, a correct eye for colour and form, left him the quality of taste; and who cares for imagination? Who does not think it a rather dangerous, senseless attribute—akin to weakness—perhaps partaking of frenzy—a disease rather than a gift of the mind?

Probably all think it so, but those who possess—or fancy they possess—it. To hear them speak, you would believe that their hearts would be cold if that elixir did not flow about them; that their eyes would be dim if

that flame did not refine their vision; that they would be lonely if this strange companion abandoned them. You would suppose that it imparted some glad hope to spring, some fine charm to summer, some tranquil joy to autumn, some consolation to winter, which you do not feel. An illusion, of course; but the fanatics cling to their dream, and would not give it for gold.

As Mr Yorke did not possess poetic imagination himself, he considered it a most superfluous quality in others. Painters and musicians he could tolerate, and even encourage, because he could relish the results of their art; he could see the charm of a fine picture, and feel the pleasure of good music; but a quiet poet—whatever force struggled, whatever fire glowed, in his breast—if he could not have played the man in the counting-house, or the tradesman in the Piece Hall, might have lived despised, and died scorned, under the eyes of Hiram Yorke.

And as there are many Hiram Yorkes in the world, it is well that the true poet, quiet externally though he may be, has often a truculent spirit under his placidity, and is full of shrewdness in his meekness, and can measure the whole stature of those who look down on him, and correctly ascertain the weight and value of the pursuits they disdain him from not having followed. It is happy that he can have his own bliss, his own society with his great friend and goddess, Nature, quite independent of those who find little pleasure in him, and in whom he finds no pleasure at all. It is just, that while the world and circumstances often turn a dark, cold side to him—and properly, too, because he first turns a dark, cold, careless side to them—he should be able to maintain a festal brightness and cherishing glow in his bosom, which makes all bright and genial for him; while strangers, perhaps, deem his existence a Polar winter never gladdened by a sun. The true poet is not one whit to be pitied; and

he is apt to laugh in his sleeve, when any misguided sympathiser whines over his wrongs. Even when utilitarians sit in judgment on him, and pronounce him and his art useless, he hears the sentence with such a hard derision, such a broad, deep, comprehensive, and merciless contempt of the unhappy Pharisees who pronounce it, that he is rather to be chidden than condoled with. These, however, are not Mr Yorke's reflections; and it is with Mr Yorke we have at present to do.

I have told you some of his faults, reader; as to his good points, he was one of the most honourable and capable men in Yorkshire: even those who disliked him were forced to respect him. He was much beloved by the poor, because he was thoroughly kind and very fatherly to them. To his workmen he was considerate and cordial: when he dismissed them from an occupation, he would try to set them on to something else; or, if that was impossible, help them to remove with their families to a district where work might possibly be had. It must also be remarked that if, as sometimes chanced, any individual amongst his "hands" showed signs of insubordination, Yorke—who, like many who abhor being controlled, knew how to control with vigour—had the secret of crushing rebellion in the germ, of eradicating it like a bad weed, so that it never spread or developed within the sphere of his authority. Such being the happy state of his own affairs, he felt himself at liberty to speak with the utmost severity of those who were differently situated; to ascribe whatever was unpleasant in their position entirely to their own fault, to sever himself from the masters, and advocate freely the cause of the operatives.

Mr Yorke's family was the first and oldest in the district; and he, though not the wealthiest, was one of the most influential men. His education had been good; in his youth, before the French Revolution, he

had travelled on the Continent: he was an adept in the French and Italian languages. During a two years' sojourn in Italy, he had collected many good paintings and tasteful rarities, with which his residence was now adorned. His manners, when he liked, were those of a finished gentleman of the old school; his conversation, when he was disposed to please, was singularly interesting and original; and if he usually expressed himself in the Yorkshire dialect, it was because he chose to do so, preferring his native Doric to a more refined vocabulary. "A Yorkshire burr," he affirmed, "was as much better than a Cockney's lisp, as a bull's bellow than a ratton's squeak."

Mr Yorke knew every one, and was known by every one for miles round; yet his intimate acquaintances were very few. Himself thoroughly original, he had no taste for what was ordinary; a racy, rough character, high or low, ever found acceptance with him; a refined, insipid personage, however exalted in station, was his aversion. He would spend an hour any time in talking freely with a shrewd workman of his own, or with some queer, sagacious old woman amongst his cottagers, when he would have grudged a moment to a commonplace fine gentleman, or to the most fashionable and elegant, if frivolous, lady. His preferences on these points he carried to an extreme, forgetting that there may be amiable, and even admirable characters amongst those who cannot be original. Yet he made exceptions to his own rule: there was a certain order of mind, plain, ingenuous, neglecting refinement, almost devoid of intellectuality, and quite incapable of appreciating what was intellectual in him; but which, at the same time, never felt disgust at his rudeness, was not easily wounded by his sarcasm, did not closely analyse his sayings, doings, or opinions; with which he was peculiarly at ease, and, consequently, which he peculiarly

preferred. He was lord amongst such characters. They, while submitting implicitly to his influence, never acknowledged, because they never reflected on, his superiority; they were quite tractable, therefore, without running the smallest danger of being servile; and their unthinking, easy, artless insensibility was as acceptable, because as convenient, to Mr Yorke, as that of the chair he sat on, or of the floor he trod.

It will have been observed that he was not quite uncordial with Mr Moore; he had two or three reasons for entertaining a faint partiality to that gentleman. It may sound odd, but the first of these was that Moore spoke English with a foreign, and French with a perfectly pure, accent; and that his dark, thin face, with its fine though rather wasted lines, had a most anti-British and anti-Yorkshire look. These points seem frivolous, unlikely to influence a character like Yorke's; but the fact is, they recalled old, perhaps pleasurable associations: they brought back his travelling, his youthful days. He had seen, amidst Italian cities and scenes, faces like Moore's; he had heard, in Parisian cafés and theatres, voices like his; he was young then, and when he looked at and listened to the alien, he seemed young again.

Secondly, he had known Moore's father, and had had dealings with him; that was a more substantial, though by no means a more agreeable tie; for, as his firm had been connected with Moore's in business, it had also, in some measure, been implicated in its losses.

Thirdly, he had found Robert himself a sharp man of business. He saw reason to anticipate that he would, in the end, by one means or another, make money; and he respected both his resolution and acuteness, perhaps also his hardness. A fourth circumstance which drew them together was that of Mr Yorke being one of the guardians of the minor on whose estate

Hollow's Mill was situated; consequently Moore, in the course of his alterations and improvements, had frequent occasion to consult him.

As to the other guest now present in Mr Yorke's parlour, Mr Helstone, between him and his host there existed a double antipathy: the antipathy of nature and that of circumstances. The free-thinker hated the formalist; the lover of liberty detested the disciplinarian: besides it was said that in former years they had been rival suitors of the same lady.

Mr Yorke, as a general rule, was, when young, noted for his preference of sprightly and dashing women: a showy shape and air, a lively wit, a ready tongue, chiefly seemed to attract him. He never, however, proposed to any of these brilliant belles, whose society he sought; and all at once he seriously fell in love with, and eagerly wooed a girl who presented a complete contrast to those he had hitherto noticed: a girl with the face of a Madonna; a girl of living marble; stillness personified. No matter that, when he spoke to her, she only answered him in monosyllables; no matter that his sighs seemed unheard, that his glances were unreturned, that she never responded to his opinions, rarely smiled at his jests, paid him no respect and no attention; no matter that she seemed the opposite of everything feminine he had ever, in his whole life, been known to admire: for him Mary Cave was perfect, because somehow, for some reason—no doubt he had a reason—he loved her.

Mr Helstone, at that time curate of Briarfield, loved Mary too; or, at any rate, he fancied her. Several others admired her, for she was beautiful as a monumental angel; but the clergyman was preferred for his office's sake: that office probably investing him with some of the illusion necessary to allure to the commission of matrimony, and which Miss Cave did not find

in any of the young wool-staplers, her other adorers. Mr Helstone neither had, nor professed to have, Mr Yorke's absorbing passion for her: he had none of the humble reverence which seemed to subdue most of her suitors; he saw her more as she really was than the rest did; he was consequently more master of her and himself. She accepted him at the first offer, and they were married.

Nature never intended Mr Helstone to make a very good husband, especially to a quiet wife. He thought, so long as a woman was silent, nothing ailed her, and she wanted nothing. If she did not complain of solitude, solitude, however continued, could not be irksome to her. If she did not talk and put herself forward, express a partiality for this, an aversion to that, she had no partialities or aversions, and it was useless to consult her tastes. He made no pretence of comprehending women, or comparing them with men; they were a different, probably a very inferior order of existence; a wife could not be her husband's companion, much less his confidant, much less his stay. *His* wife, after a year or two, was of no great importance to him in any shape; and when she one day, as he thought, suddenly—for he had scarcely noticed her decline—but, as others thought, gradually, took her leave of him and of life, and there was only a still beautiful-featured mould of clay left, cold and white in the conjugal couch, he felt his bereavement—who shall say how little? Yet, perhaps, more than he seemed to feel it; for he was not a man from whom grief easily wrung tears.

His dry-eyed and sober mourning scandalised an old housekeeper, and likewise a female attendant, who had waited upon Mrs Helstone in her sickness: and who, perhaps, had had opportunities of learning more of the deceased lady's nature, of her capacity for feeling

and loving, than her husband knew: they gossiped together over the corpse, related anecdotes with embellishments of her lingering decline, and its real or supposed cause; in short, they worked each other up to some indignation against the austere little man, who sat examining papers in an adjoining room, unconscious of what opprobrium he was the object.

Mrs Helstone was hardly under the sod when rumours began to be rife in the neighbourhood that she had died of a broken heart; these magnified quickly into reports of hard usage, and, finally, details of harsh treatment on the part of her husband: reports grossly untrue, but not the less eagerly received on that account. Mr Yorke heard them, partly believed them. Already, of course, he had no friendly feeling to his successful rival; though himself a married man now, and united to a woman who seemed a complete contrast to Mary Cave in all respects, he could not forget the great disappointment of his life; and when he heard that what would have been so precious to him had been neglected, perhaps abused by another, he conceived for that other a rooted and bitter animosity.

Of the nature and strength of this animosity, Mr Helstone was but half aware: he neither knew how much Yorke had loved Mary Cave, what he had felt on losing her, nor was he conscious of the calumnies concerning his treatment of her, familiar to every ear in the neighbourhood but his own. He believed political and religious differences alone separated him and Mr Yorke; had he known how the case really stood, he would hardly have been induced by any persuasion to cross his former rival's threshold.

Mr Yorke did not resume his lecture of Robert Moore; the conversation erelong recommenced in a more general form, though still in a somewhat disputa-

tive tone. The unquiet state of the country, the various depredations lately committed on mill-property in the district, supplied abundant matter for disagreement; especially as each of the three gentlemen present differed more or less in his views on these subjects. Mr Helstone thought the masters aggrieved, the workpeople unreasonable: he condemned sweepingly the wide-spread spirit of disaffection against constituted authorities, the growing indisposition to bear with patience evils he regarded as inevitable: the cures he prescribed were vigorous government interference, strict magisterial vigilance; when necessary, prompt military coercion.

Mr Yorke wished to know whether this interference, vigilance, and coercion would feed those who were hungry, give work to those who wanted work, and whom no man would hire. He scouted the idea of inevitable evils; he said public patience was a camel, on whose back the last atom that could be borne had already been laid, and that resistance was now a duty: the wide-spread spirit of disaffection against constituted authorities he regarded as the most promising sign of the times; the masters, he allowed, were truly aggrieved, but their main grievances had been heaped on them by a "corrupt, base, and bloody" government (these were Mr Yorke's epithets). Madmen like Pitt, demons like Castlereagh, mischievous idiots like Perceval, were the tyrants, the curses of the country, the destroyers of her trade. It was their infatuated perseverance in an unjustifiable, a hopeless, a ruinous war, which had brought the nation to its present pass. It was their monstrously oppressive taxation, it was the infamous "Orders in Council"—the originators of which deserved impeachment and the scaffold, if ever public men did—that hung a millstone about England's neck.

"But where was the use of talking?" he demanded —"What chance was there of reason being heard in a

land that was king-ridden, priest-ridden, peer-ridden—where a lunatic was the nominal monarch, an unprincipled debauchee the real ruler; where such an insult to common sense as hereditary legislators was tolerated—where such a humbug as a bench of bishops—such an arrogant abuse as a pampered, persecuting established Church was endured and venerated—where a standing army was maintained, and a host of lazy parsons and their pauper families were kept on the fat of the land?"

Mr Helstone, rising up and putting on his shovel-hat, observed in reply, "That in the course of his life he had met with two or three instances where sentiments of this sort had been very bravely maintained so long as health, strength, and worldly prosperity had been the allies of him who professed them; but there came a time," he said, "to all men, 'when the keepers of the house should tremble; when they should be afraid of that which is high, and fear should be in the way;' and that time was the test of the advocate of anarchy and rebellion, the enemy of religion and order. Ere now," he affirmed, "he had been called upon to read those prayers our Church has provided for the sick, by the miserable dying-bed of one of her most rancorous foes; he had seen such a one stricken with remorse, solicitous to discover a place for repentance, and unable to find any, though he sought it carefully with tears. He must forewarn Mr Yorke, that blasphemy against God and the king was a deadly sin, and that there was such a thing as 'judgment to come.'"

Mr Yorke "believed fully that there was such a thing as judgment to come. If it were otherwise, it would be difficult to imagine how all the scoundrels who seemed triumphant in this world, who broke innocent hearts with impunity, abused unmerited privileges, were a scandal to honourable callings, took the bread out of the

mouths of the poor, browbeat the humble, and truckled meanly to the rich and proud—were to be properly paid off, in such coin as they had earned. But," he added, "whenever he got low-spirited about such like goings-on, and their seeming success in this mucky lump of a planet, he just reached down t' owd book" (pointing to a great Bible in the bookcase), "opened it like at a chance, and he was sure to light of a verse blazing wi' a blue brimstone low that set all straight. He knew," he said, "where some folk war bound for, just as weel as if an angel wi' great white wings had come in ower t' door-stone and told him."

"Sir," said Mr Helstone, collecting all his dignity, "Sir—the great knowledge of man is to know himself, and the bourne whither his own steps tend."

"Ay, ay! you'll recollect, Mr Helstone, that Ignorance was carried away from the very gates of heaven, borne through the air, and thrust in at a door in the side of the hill which led down to hell."

"Nor have I forgotten, Mr Yorke, that Vain-Confidence, not seeing the way before him, fell into a deep pit, which was on purpose there made by the prince of the grounds, to catch vainglorious fools withal, and was dashed to pieces with his fall."

"Now," interposed Mr Moore, who had hitherto sat a silent but amused spectator of this wordy combat, and whose indifference to the party politics of the day, as well as to the gossip of the neighbourhood, made him an impartial, if apathetic, judge of the merits of such an encounter—"you have both sufficiently black-balled each other, and proved how cordially you detest each other, and how wicked you think each other. For my part, my hate is still running in such a strong current against the fellows who have broken my frames, that I have none to spare for my private acquaintance, and still less for such a vague thing as a sect or a government:

but really, gentlemen, you both seem very bad by your own showing; worse than ever I suspected you to be. I dare not stay all night with a rebel and blasphemer, like you, Yorke; and I hardly dare ride home with a cruel and tyrannical ecclesiastic, like Mr Helstone."

"I am going, however, Mr Moore," said the Rector sternly: "come with me or not, as you please."

"Nay, he shall not have the choice—he *shall* go with you," responded Yorke. "It's midnight, and past; and I'll have nob'dy staying up i' in my house any longer. Ye mun all go."

He rang the bell.

"Deb," said he to the servant who answered it, "clear them folk out o' t' kitchen, and lock t' doors, and be off to bed. Here is your way, gentlemen," he continued to his guests; and, lighting them through the passage, he fairly put them out at his front-door.

They met their party hurrying out pell-mell by the back way; their horses stood at the gate; they mounted, and rode off—Moore laughing at their abrupt dismissal, Helstone deeply indignant thereat.

Chapter 6.

HOLLOW'S COTTAGE.

MOORE'S good spirits were still with him when he rose next morning. He and Joe Scott had both spent the night in the mill, availing themselves of certain sleeping accommodations producible from recesses in the front and back counting-houses; the master, always an early riser, was up somewhat sooner even than usual; he awoke his man by singing a French song as he made his toilet.

"Ye're not custen dahm, then, maister?" cried Joe.

"Not a stiver, mon garçon—which means, my lad. Get up, and we'll take a turn through the mill before the hands come in, and I'll explain my future plans. We'll have the machinery yet, Joseph; you never heard of Bruce, perhaps?"

"And th' arrand (spider)? Yes, but I hev: I've read th' history o' Scotland, and happen knaw as mich on't as ye; and I understand ye to mean to say ye'll persevere."

"I do."

"Is there mony o' your mak i' your country?" inquired Joe as he folded up his temporary bed, and put it away.

"In my country! Which is my country?"

"Why, France—isn't it?"

"Not it, indeed! The circumstance of the French having seized Antwerp, where I was born, does not make me a Frenchman."

"Holland, then?"

"I am not a Dutchman: now you are confounding Antwerp with Amsterdam?"

"Flanders?"

"I scorn the insinuation, Joe! I, a Flamand! Have I a Flemish face?—the clumsy nose standing out—the mean forehead falling back—the pale blue eyes 'à fleur de tête?' Am I all body and no legs, like a Flamand? But you don't know what they are like—those Netherlanders. Joe, I'm an Anversois: my mother was an Anversoise, though she came of French lineage, which is the reason I speak French."

"But your father war Yorkshire, which maks ye a bit Yorkshire too: and onybody may see ye're akin to us, ye're so keen o' making brass, and getting forrards."

"Joe, you're an impudent dog; but I've always

been accustomed to a boorish sort of insolence from my youth up: the 'classe ouvrière'—that is, the working people in Belgium—bear themselves brutally towards their employers; and by *brutally*, Joe, I mean *brutalement*—which, perhaps, when properly translated, should be *roughly*."

"We allus speak our minds i' this country; and them young parsons and grand folk fro' London is shocked at wer '*incivility*,' and we like weel enough to gi'e 'em summat to be shocked at, 'cause it's sport to us to watch 'em turn up the whites o' their een, and spreed out their bits o' hands, like as they're flayed wi' bogards, and then to hear 'em say, nipping off their words short like—'Dear! dear! Whet seveges! How very corse!'"

"You *are* savages, Joe; you don't suppose you're civilised, do you?"

"Middling, middling, maister. I reckon 'at us manufacturing lads i' th' north is a deal more intelligent, and knaws a deal more nor th' farming folk i' th' south. Trade sharpens wer wits; and them that's mechanics, like me, is forced to think. Ye know, what wi' looking after machinery and sich like, I've getten into that way that when I see an effect, I look straight out for a cause, and I oft lig hold on't to purpose; and then I like reading, and I'm curious to knaw what them that reckons to govern us aims to do for us and wi' us: and there's many 'cuter nor me; there's many a one amang them greasy chaps 'at smells o' oil, and amang them dyers wi' blue and black skins, that has a long head, and that can tell what a fooil of a law is, as well as ye or old Yorke, and a deal better nor soft uns like Christopher Sykes o' Whinbury, and greet hectoring nowts like yond' Irish Peter, Helstone's curate."

"You think yourself a clever fellow, I know, Scott."

"Ay! I'm fairish; I can tell cheese fro' chalk, and I'm varry weel aware that I've improved sich opportunities as I have had, a deal better nor some 'at reckons to be aboon me; but there's thousands i' Yorkshire that's as good as me, and a two-three that's better."

"You're a great man—you're a sublime fellow; but you're a prig, a conceited noodle with it all, Joe! You need not to think that because you've picked up a little knowledge of practical mathematics, and because you have found some scantling of the elements of chemistry at the bottom of a dyeing vat, that therefore you're a neglected man of science; and you need not to suppose that because the course of trade does not always run smooth, and you, and such as you, are sometimes short of work and of bread, that therefore your class are martyrs, and that the whole form of government under which you live is wrong. And, moreover, you need not for a moment to insinuate that the virtues have taken refuge in cottages and wholly abandoned slated houses. Let me tell you, I particularly abominate that sort of trash, because I know so well that human nature is human nature everywhere, whether under tile or thatch, and that in every specimen of human nature that breathes, vice and virtue are ever found blended, in smaller or greater proportions, and that the proportion is not determined by station. I have seen villains who were rich, and I have seen villains who were poor, and I have seen villains who were neither rich nor poor, but who had realised Agar's wish, and lived in fair and modest competency. The clock is going to strike six: away with you, Joe, and ring the mill bell."

It was now the middle of the month of February; by six o'clock, therefore, dawn was just beginning to steal on night, to penetrate with a pale ray its brown obscurity, and give a demi-translucence to its opaque shadows. Pale enough that ray was on this particular

morning; no colour tinged the east, no flush warmed it. To see what a heavy lid day slowly lifted, what a wan glance she flung along the hills, you would have thought the sun's fire quenched in last night's floods. The breath of this morning was chill as its aspect; a raw wind stirred the mass of night-cloud, and showed, as it slowly rose—leaving a colourless, silver-gleaming ring all round the horizon—not blue sky, but a stratum of paler vapour beyond. It had ceased to rain, but the earth was sodden, and the pools and rivulets were full.

The mill-windows were alight, the bell still rung loud, and now the little children came running in, in too great a hurry, let us hope, to feel very much nipped by the inclement air; and, indeed, by contrast, perhaps the morning appeared rather favourable to them than otherwise; for they had often come to their work that winter through snow-storms, through heavy rain, through hard frost.

Mr Moore stood at the entrance to watch them pass: he counted them as they went by; to those who came rather late he said a word of reprimand, which was a little more sharply repeated by Joe Scott when the lingerers reached the work-rooms. Neither master nor overlooker spoke savagely; they were not savage men either of them, though it appeared both were rigid, for they fined a delinquent who came considerably too late: Mr Moore made him pay his penny down ere he entered, and informed him that the next repetition of the fault would cost him twopence.

Rules, no doubt, are necessary in such cases, and coarse and cruel masters will make coarse and cruel rules, which, at the time we treat of at least, they used sometimes to enforce tyrannically; but, though I describe imperfect characters (every character in this book will be found to be more or less imperfect, my pen refusing to draw anything in the model line), I have not under-

taken to handle degraded or utterly infamous ones. Child-torturers, slave masters and drivers, I consign to the hands of jailers; the novelist may be excused from sullying his page with the record of his deeds.

Instead, then, of harrowing up my reader's soul, and delighting his organ of Wonder, with effective descriptions of stripes and scourgings, I am happy to be able to inform him that neither Mr Moore nor his overlooker ever struck a child in their mill. Joe had, indeed, once very severely flogged a son of his own for telling a lie and persisting in it; but, like his employer, he was too phlegmatic, too calm, as well as too reasonable a man, to make corporal chastisement other than the exception to his treatment of the young.

Mr Moore haunted his mill, his mill-yard, his dye-house, and his warehouse, till the sickly dawn strengthened into day. The sun even rose,—at least a white disk, clear, tintless, and almost chill-looking as ice,—peeped over the darkness of a hill, changed to silver the livid edge of the cloud above it, and looked solemnly down the whole length of the den, or narrow dale, to whose strait bounds we are at present limited. It was eight o'clock; the mill lights were all extinguished; the signal was given for breakfast; the children, released for half an hour from toil, betook themselves to the little tin cans which held their coffee, and to the small baskets which contained their allowance of bread. Let us hope they have enough to eat; it would be a pity were it otherwise.

And now, at last, Mr Moore quitted the mill-yard, and bent his steps to his dwelling-house. It was only a short distance from the factory, but the hedge and high bank on each side of the lane which conducted to it seemed to give it something of the appearance and feeling of seclusion. It was a small, white-washed place, with a green porch over the door; scanty brown

stalks showed in the garden soil near this porch, and likewise beneath the windows,—stalks budless and flowerless now, but giving dim prediction of trained and blooming creepers for summer days. A grass plot and borders fronted the cottage; the borders presented only black mould yet, except where, in sheltered nooks, the first shoots of snowdrop or crocus peeped, green as emerald, from the earth. The spring was late; it had been a severe and long winter; the last deep snow had but just disappeared before yesterday's rains; on the hills, indeed, white remnants of it yet gleamed, flecking the hollows and crowning the peaks: the lawn was not verdant, but bleached, as was the grass on the bank, and under the hedge in the lane. Three trees, gracefully grouped, rose beside the cottage: they were not lofty, but having no rivals near, they looked well and imposing where they grew. Such was Mr Moore's home: a snug nest for content and contemplation, but one within which the wings of action and ambition could not long lie folded.

Its air of modest comfort seemed to possess no particular attraction for its owner; instead of entering the house at once, he fetched a spade from a little shed, and began to work in the garden. For about an hour he dug on uninterrupted: at length, however, a window opened, and a female voice called to him—

"Eh, bien! Tu ne déjeûnes pas ce matin?"

The answer, and the rest of the conversation was in French; but, as this is an English book, I shall translate it into English.

"Is breakfast ready, Hortense?"

"Certainly; it has been ready half-an-hour."

"Then I am ready too: I have a canine hunger."

He threw down his spade and entered the house: the narrow passage conducted him to a small parlour, where a breakfast of coffee and bread and butter, with

the somewhat un-English accompaniment of stewed pears was spread on the table. Over these viands presided the lady who had spoken from the window. I must describe her before I go any further.

She seemed a little older than Mr Moore, perhaps she was thirty-five, tall, and proportionately stout; she had very black hair, for the present twisted up in curl-papers; a high colour in her cheeks, a small nose, a pair of little black eyes. The lower part of her face was large in proportion to the upper; her forehead was small and rather corrugated; she had a fretful, though not an ill-natured expression of countenance; there was something in her whole appearance one felt inclined to be half provoked with and half amused at. The strangest point was her dress; a stuff petticoat and a striped cotton camisole. The petticoat was short, displaying well a pair of feet and ankles which left much to be desired in the article of symmetry.

You will think I have depicted a remarkable slattern, reader; — not at all. Hortense Moore (she was Mr Moore's sister) was a very orderly, economical person; the petticoat, camisole, and curl-papers were her morning costume, in which, of forenoons, she had always been accustomed to "go her household ways" in her own country. She did not choose to adopt English fashions because she was obliged to live in England; she adhered to her old Belgian modes, quite satisfied that there was a merit in so doing.

Mademoiselle had an excellent opinion of herself, an opinion not wholly undeserved; for she possessed some good and sterling qualities; but she rather over-estimated the kind and degree of these qualities, and quite left out of the account sundry little defects which accompanied them. You could never have persuaded her that she was a prejudiced and narrow-minded person, that she was too susceptible on the subject of

her own dignity and importance, and too apt to take offence about trifles; yet all this was true. However, where her claims to distinction were not opposed, and where her prejudices were not offended, she could be kind and friendly enough. To her two brothers (for there was another Gérard Moore besides Robert), she was very much attached. As the sole remaining representatives of their decayed family, the persons of both were almost sacred in her eyes: of Louis, however, she knew less than of Robert; he had been sent to England when a mere boy, and had received his education at an English school. His education not being such as to adapt him for trade, perhaps, too, his natural bent not inclining him to mercantile pursuits, he had, when the blight of hereditary prospects rendered it necessary for him to push his own fortune, adopted the very arduous and very modest career of a teacher; he had been usher in a school, and was said now to be tutor in a private family. Hortense, when she mentioned Louis, described him as having what she called "des moyens," but as being too backward and quiet: her praise of Robert was in a different strain, less qualified; she was very proud of him; she regarded him as the greatest man in Europe; all he said and did was remarkable in her eyes, and she expected others to behold him from the same point of view; nothing could be more irrational, monstrous, and infamous, than opposition from any quarter to Robert, unless it were opposition to herself.

Accordingly, as soon as the said Robert was seated at the breakfast table, and she had helped him to a portion of stewed pears, and cut him a good-sized Belgian tartine, she began to pour out a flood of amazement and horror at the transaction of last night, the destruction of the frames.

"Quelle idée? to destroy them. Quelle action

honteuse! On voyait bien qui les ouvriers de ce pays étaient à la fois bêtes et méchants. C'était absolument comme les domestiques Anglais, les servantes surtout: rien d'insupportable comme cette Sara, par exemple!"

"She looks clean and industrious," Mr Moore remarked.

"Looks! I don't know how she looks; and I do not say that she is altogether dirty or idle: mais elle est d'une insolence! She disputed with me a quarter of an hour yesterday about the cooking of the beef; she said I boiled it to rags, that English people would never be able to eat such a dish as our bouilli, that the bouillon was no better than greasy warm water, and as to the choucroute, she affirms she cannot touch it. That barrel we have in the cellar — delightfully prepared by my own hands—she termed a tub of hog-wash, which means food for pigs. I am harassed with the girl, and yet I cannot part with her lest I should get a worse. You are in the same position with your workmen,—pauvre cher frère!"

"I am afraid you are not very happy in England, Hortense."

"It is my duty to be happy where you are, brother; but otherwise, there are certainly a thousand things which make me regret our native town. All the world here appears to me ill-bred (mal-elevé). I find my habits considered ridiculous: if a girl out of your mill chances to come into the kitchen and find me in my jupon and camisole preparing dinner (for you know I cannot trust Sarah to cook a single dish), she sneers. If I accept an invitation out to tea, which I have done once or twice, I perceive I am put quite into the back-ground; I have not that attention paid me which is decidedly my due. Of what an excellent family are the Gérards, as we know, and the Moores also! They have a right to claim a certain respect, and to feel

wounded when it is withheld from them. In Antwerp I was always treated with distinction; here, one would think that when I open my lips in company, I speak English with a ridiculous accent, whereas I am quite assured that I pronounce it perfectly."

"Hortense, in Antwerp we were known rich; in England we were never known but poor."

"Precisely, and thus mercenary are mankind. Again, dear brother, last Sunday, if you recollect, was very wet: accordingly, I went to church in my neat black sabots, objects one would not indeed wear in a fashionable city; but which in the country I have ever been accustomed to use for walking in dirty roads. Believe me, as I paced up the aisle, composed and tranquil, as I am always, four ladies, and as many gentlemen, laughed and hid their faces behind their prayer-books."

"Well, well! don't put on the sabots again. I told you before I thought they were not quite the thing for this country."

"But, brother, they are not the common sabots such as the peasantry wear. I tell you they are sabots noirs, très propres, très convenables. At Mons and Leuze—cities not very far removed from the elegant capital of Brussels—it is very seldom that the respectable people wear anything else for walking in winter. Let any one try to wade the mud of the Flemish chaussées in a pair of Paris brodequins, on m'en dirait des nouvelles!"

"Never mind Mons and Leuze, and the Flemish chaussées; do at Rome as the Romans do! and as to the camisole and jupon, I am not quite sure about them either. I never see an English lady dressed in such garments. Ask Caroline Helstone."

"Caroline! *I* ask Caroline? *I* consult her about my dress? It is *she* who on all points should consult *me*; she is a child."

"She is eighteen, or at the least seventeen; old

enough to know all about gowns, petticoats, and chaussures."

"Do not spoil Caroline, I entreat you, brother; do not make her of more consequence than she ought to be. At present she is modest and unassuming, let us keep her so."

"With all my heart. Is she coming this morning?"

"She will come at ten, as usual, to take her French lesson."

"You don't find that she sneers at you, do you?"

"She does not, she appreciates me better than any one else here; but then she has more intimate opportunities of knowing me: she sees that I have education, intelligence, manner, principles; all, in short, which belongs to a person well born and well bred."

"Are you at all fond of her?"

"For *fond*—I cannot say: I am not one who is prone to take violent fancies, and, consequently, my friendship is the more to be depended on. I have a regard for her as my relative; her position also inspires interest, and her conduct as my pupil has hitherto been such as rather to enhance than diminish the attachment that springs from other causes."

"She behaves pretty well at lessons?"

"To *me* she behaves very well; but you are conscious, brother, that I have a manner calculated to repel over-familiarity, to win esteem, and to command respect. Yet, possessed of penetration, I perceive clearly that Caroline is not perfect; that there is much to be desired in her."

"Give me a last cup of coffee, and while I am drinking it amuse me with an account of her faults."

"Dear brother, I am happy to see you eat your breakfast with relish, after the fatiguing night you have passed. Caroline, then, is defective; but, with my forming hand and almost motherly care, she may

improve. There is about her an occasional something —a reserve, I think—which I do not quite like, because it is not sufficiently girlish and submissive; and there are glimpses of an unsettled hurry in her nature, which put me out. Yet she is usually most tranquil, too dejected and thoughtful indeed sometimes. In time, I doubt not, I shall make her uniformly sedate and decorous, without being unaccountably pensive. I ever disapprove what is not intelligible."

"I don't understand your account in the least; what do you mean by 'unsettled hurries,' for instance?"

"An example will, perhaps, be the most satisfactory explanation. I sometimes, you are aware, make her read French poetry by way of practice in pronunciation. She has, in the course of her lessons, gone through much of Corneille and Racine, in a very steady, sober spirit, such as I approve. Occasionally she showed, indeed, a degree of languor in the perusal of those esteemed authors, partaking rather of apathy than sobriety, and apathy is what I cannot tolerate in those who have the benefit of my instructions; besides, one should not be apathetic in studying standard works. The other day I put into her hands a volume of short fugitive pieces. I sent her to the window to learn one by heart, and when I looked up I saw her turning the leaves over impatiently, and curling her lip, absolutely with scorn, as she surveyed the little poems cursorily. I chid her. 'Ma cousine,' said she, 'tout cela m'ennuie à la mort.' I told her this was improper language.—'Dieu!' she exclaimed. 'Il n'y a donc pas deux lignes de poësie dans toute la littérature française?' I inquired what she meant. She begged my pardon with proper submission. Erelong she was still; I saw her smiling to herself over the book; she began to learn assiduously. In half-an-hour she came and stood before me, presented the volume, folded her hands, as I always require her to do, and commenced

the repetition of that short thing by Chénier, 'La Jeune Captive.' If you had heard the manner in which she went through this, and in which she uttered a few incoherent comments when she had done, you would have known what I meant by the phrase 'unsettled hurry.' One would have thought Chénier was more moving than all Racine and all Corneille. You, brother, who have so much sagacity, will discern that this disproportionate preference argues an ill-regulated mind; but she is fortunate in a preceptress. I will give her a system, a method of thought, a set of opinions: I will give her the perfect control and guidance of her feelings."

"Be sure you do, Hortense; here she comes. That was her shadow passed the window, I believe."

"Ah! truly. She is too early—half-an-hour before her time.—My child, what brings you here before I have breakfasted?"

This question was addressed to an individual who now entered the room, a young girl, wrapped in a winter mantle, the folds of which were gathered with some grace round an apparently slender figure.

"I came in haste to see how you were, Hortense, and how Robert was, too. I was sure you would be both grieved by what happened last night. I did not hear till this morning; my uncle told me at breakfast."

"Ah! it is unspeakable. You sympathise with us? Your uncle sympathises with us?"

"My uncle is very angry; but he was with Robert, I believe: was he not? Did he not go with you to Stilbro' Moor?"

"Yes: we set out in very martial style, Caroline: but the prisoners we went to rescue met us half-way."

"Of course, nobody was hurt?"

"Why, no; only Joe Scott's wrists were a little galled with being pinioned too tightly behind his back."

"You were not there? You were not with the waggons when they were attacked?"

"No: one seldom has the fortune to be present at occurrences at which one would particularly wish to assist."

"Where are you going this morning? I saw Murgatroyd saddling your horse in the yard."

"To Whinbury: it is market day."

"Mr Yorke is going too: I met him in his gig. Come home with him."

"Why?"

"Two are better than one, and nobody dislikes Mr Yorke; at least, poor people do not dislike him."

"Therefore he would be a protection to me, who am hated?"

"Who are *misunderstood*; that, probably, is the word. Shall you be late?—Will he be late, cousin Hortense?"

"It is too probable: he has often much business to transact at Whinbury. Have you brought your exercise book, child?"

"Yes. What time will you return, Robert?"

"I generally return at seven. Do you wish me to be at home earlier?"

"Try rather to be back by six. It is not absolutely dark at six now; but by seven daylight is quite gone."

"And what danger is to be apprehended, Caroline, when daylight *is* gone? What peril do you conceive comes as the companion of darkness, for me?"

"I am not sure that I can define my fears; but we all have a certain anxiety at present about our friends. My uncle calls these times dangerous: he says, too, that mill-owners are unpopular."

"And I one of the most unpopular? Is not that the fact? You are reluctant to speak out plainly, but at heart you think me liable to Pearson's fate, who was

shot at—not, indeed, from behind a hedge, but in his own house, through his staircase-window, as he was going to bed."

"Anne Pearson showed me the bullet in the chamber-door," remarked Caroline gravely, as she folded her mantle, and arranged it and her muff on a side-table. "You know," she continued, "there is a hedge all the way along the road from here to Whinbury, and there are the Fieldhead plantations to pass; but you will be back by six—or before?"

"Certainly he will," affirmed Hortense. "And now, my child, prepare your lessons for repetition, while I put the peas to soak for the purée at dinner."

With this direction, she left the room.

"You suspect I have many enemies, then, Caroline," said Mr Moore; "and doubtless you know me to be destitute of friends?"

"Not destitute, Robert. There is your sister, your brother Louis—whom I have never seen—there is Mr Yorke, and there is my uncle; besides, of course, many more."

Robert smiled. "You would be puzzled to name your 'many more,'" said he. "But show me your exercise-book. What extreme pains you take with the writing. My sister, I suppose, exacts this care: she wants to form you in all things after the model of a Flemish school-girl. What life are you destined for, Caroline? What will you do with your French, drawing, and other accomplishments when they are acquired?"

"You may well say, when they are acquired; for, as you are aware, till Hortense began to teach me, I knew precious little. As to the life I am destined for, I cannot tell: I suppose, to keep my uncle's house, till"——she hesitated.

"Till what? Till he dies?"

"No. How harsh to say that! I never think of his dying: he is only fifty-five. But till—in short, till events offer other occupations for me."

"A remarkably vague prospect! Are you content with it?"

"I used to be, formerly. Children, you know, have little reflection, or rather their reflections run on ideal themes. There are moments *now* when I am not quite satisfied."

"Why?"

"I am making no money—earning nothing."

"You come to the point, Lina; you too, then, wish to make money?"

"I do: I should like an occupation; and if I were a boy, it would not be so difficult to find one. I see such an easy, pleasant way of learning a business, and making my way in life."

"Go on: let us hear what way."

"I could be apprenticed to your trade—the cloth-trade: I could learn it of you, as we are distant relations. I would do the counting-house work, keep the books, and write the letters, while you went to market. I know you greatly desire to be rich, in order to pay your father's debts; perhaps I could help you to get rich."

"Help *me?* You should think of yourself."

"I do think of myself; but must one for ever think only of oneself?"

"Of whom else do I think? Of whom else *dare* I think? The poor ought to have no large sympathies; it is their duty to be narrow."

"No, Robert"——

"Yes, Caroline. Poverty is necessarily selfish, contracted, grovelling, anxious. Now and then a poor man's heart, when certain beams and dews visit it, may swell like the budding vegetation in yonder garden on

this spring-day, may feel ripe to evolve in foliage—perhaps blossom; but he must not encourage the pleasant impulse; he must invoke Prudence to check it, with that frosty breath of hers, which is as nipping as any north wind."

"No cottage would be happy then."

"When I speak of poverty, I do not so much mean the natural, habitual poverty of the working-man, as the embarrassed penury of the man in debt; my grub-worm is always a straitened, struggling, care-worn tradesman."

"Cherish hope, not anxiety. Certain ideas have become too fixed on your mind. It may be presumptuous to say it, but I have the impression that there is something wrong in your notions of the best means of attaining happiness; as there is in"—— Second hesitation.

"I am all ear, Caroline."

"In—(courage! let me speak the truth)—in your manner—mind, I say only *manner*—to these Yorkshire workpeople."

"You have often wanted to tell me that, have you not?"

"Yes; often—very often."

"The faults of my manner are, I think, only negative. I am not proud: what has a man in my position to be proud of? I am only taciturn, phlegmatic, and joyless."

"As if your living cloth-dressers were all machines like your frames and shears: in your own house you seem different."

"To those of my own house I am no alien, which I am to these English clowns. I might act the benevolent with them, but acting is not my *forte*. I find them irrational, perverse; they hinder me when I long to hurry forward. In treating them justly, I fulfil my whole duty towards them."

"You don't expect them to love you, of course?"

"Nor wish it."

"Ah!" said the monitress, shaking her head and heaving a deep sigh. With this ejaculation, indicative that she perceived a screw to be loose somewhere, but that it was out of her reach to set it right, she bent over her grammar, and sought the rule and exercise for the day.

"I suppose I am not an affectionate man, Caroline; the attachment of a very few suffices me."

"If you please, Robert, will you mend me a pen or two before you go?"

"First, let me rule your book, for you always contrive to draw the lines aslant. . . . There now. . . . And now for the pens: you like a fine one, I think?"

"Such as you generally make for me and Hortense; not your own broad points."

"If I were of Louis's calling, I might stay at home and dedicate this morning to you and your studies; whereas I must spend it in Sykes's wool-warehouse."

"You will be making money."

"More likely losing it."

As he finished mending the pens, a horse, saddled and bridled, was brought up to the garden-gate.

"There, Fred is ready for me; I must go. I'll take one look to see what the spring has done in the south border, too, first."

He quitted the room, and went out into the garden-ground behind the mill. A sweet fringe of young verdure and opening flowers—snowdrop, crocus, even primrose—bloomed in the sunshine under the hot wall of the factory. Moore plucked here and there a blossom and leaf, till he had collected a little bouquet; he returned to the parlour, pilfered a thread of silk from his sister's work-basket, tied the flowers, and laid them on Caroline's desk.

"Now, good-morning."

"Thank you, Robert: it is pretty; it looks, as it lies there, like sparkles of sunshine, and blue sky: good-morning."

He went to the door—stopped—opened his lips as if to speak—said nothing, and moved on. He passed through the wicket, and mounted his horse: in a second, he had flung himself from the saddle again, transferred the reins to Murgatroyd, and re-entered the cottage.

"I forgot my gloves," he said, appearing to take something from the side-table; then, as an impromptu thought, he remarked, "You have no binding engagement at home perhaps, Caroline?"

"I never have: some children's socks, which Mrs Ramsden has ordered, to knit for the Jew's basket; but they will keep."

"Jew's basket be——sold! Never was utensil better named. Anything more Jewish than it—its contents, and their prices—cannot be conceived: but I see something, a very tiny curl, at the corners of your lip, which tells me that you know its merits as well as I do. Forget the Jew's basket, then, and spend the day here as a change. Your uncle won't break his heart at your absence?"

She smiled. "No."

"The old Cossack! I daresay not," muttered Moore. "Then stay and dine with Hortense; she will be glad of your company; I shall return in good time. We will have a little reading in the evening: the moon rises at half-past eight, and I will walk up to the rectory with you at nine. Do you agree?"

She nodded her head; and her eyes lit up.

Moore lingered yet two minutes: he bent over Caroline's desk and glanced at her grammar, he fingered her pen, he lifted her bouquet and played with it; his

horse stamped impatient: Fred Murgatroyd hemmed and coughed at the gate, as if he wondered what in the world his master was doing. "Good-morning," again said Moore, and finally vanished.

Hortense, coming in ten minutes after, found to her surprise, that Caroline had not yet commenced her exercise.

Chapter VI.

CORIOLANUS.

MADEMOISELLE MOORE had that morning a somewhat absent-minded pupil. Caroline forgot, again and again, the explanations which were given to her; however, she still bore with unclouded mood the chidings her inattention brought upon her. Sitting in the sunshine, near the window, she seemed to receive with its warmth a kind influence, which made her both happy and good. Thus disposed, she looked her best, and her best was a pleasing vision.

To her had not been denied the gift of beauty; it was not absolutely necessary to know her in order to like her; she was fair enough to please, even at the first view. Her shape suited her age: it was girlish, light and pliant; every curve was neat, every limb proportionate: her face was expressive and gentle; her eyes were handsome, and gifted at times with a winning beam that stole into the heart, with a language that spoke softly to the affections. Her mouth was very pretty; she had a delicate skin, and a fine flow of brown hair, which she knew how to arrange with taste; curls became her, and she possessed them in picturesque profusion. Her style of dress announced taste in the wearer; very unobtrusive in fashion, far from costly in material, but suitable in colour to the fair complexion

with which it contrasted, and in make to the slight form which it draped. Her present winter garb was of merino, the same soft shade of brown as her hair; the little collar round her neck lay over a pink ribbon, and was fastened with a pink knot: she wore no other decoration.

So much for Caroline Helstone's appearance; as to her character or intellect, if she had any, they must speak for themselves in due time.

Her connections are soon explained. She was the child of parents separated soon after her birth, in consequence of disagreement of disposition. Her mother was the half-sister of Mr Moore's father; thus—though there was no mixture of blood—she was, in a distant sense, the cousin of Robert, Louis, and Hortense. Her father was the brother of Mr Helstone—a man of the character friends desire not to recall, after death has once settled all earthly accounts. He had rendered his wife unhappy: the reports which were known to be true concerning him had given an air of probability to those which were falsely circulated respecting his better-principled brother. Caroline had never known her mother, as she was taken from her in infancy, and had not since seen her; her father died comparatively young, and her uncle, the Rector, had for some years been her sole guardian. He was not, as we are aware, much adapted, either by nature or habits, to have the charge of a young girl: he had taken little trouble about her education; probably, he would have taken none if she, finding herself neglected, had not grown anxious on her own account, and asked, every now and then, for a little attention, and for the means of acquiring such amount of knowledge as could not be dispensed with. Still, she had a depressing feeling that she was inferior, that her attainments were fewer than were usually possessed by girls of her age and station; and very glad was she to avail herself of the kind offer made by her cousin Hor-

tense, soon after the arrival of the latter at Hollow's Mill, to teach her French and fine needlework. Mdlle. Moore, for her part, delighted in the task, because it gave her importance; she liked to lord it a little over a docile yet quick pupil. She took Caroline precisely at her own estimate, as an irregularly-taught, even ignorant girl; and when she found that she made rapid and eager progress, it was to no talent, no application in the scholar, she ascribed the improvement, but entirely to her own superior method of teaching; when she found that Caroline, unskilled in routine, had a knowledge of her own—desultory but varied, the discovery caused her no surprise, for she still imagined that from her conversation had the girl unawares gleaned these treasures: she thought it even when forced to feel that her pupil knew much on subjects whereof she knew little: the idea was not logical, but Hortense had perfect faith in it.

Mademoiselle, who prided herself on possessing "un esprit positif," and on entertaining a decided preference for dry studies, kept her young cousin to the same as closely as she could. She worked her unrelentingly at the grammar of the French language, assigning her, as the most improving exercise she could devise, interminable "analyses logiques." These "analyses" were by no means a source of particular pleasure to Caroline; she thought she could have learned French just as well without them, and grudged excessively the time spent in pondering over "propositions, principales, et incidents;" in deciding the "incidente determinative," and the "incidente applicative;" in examining whether the proposition was "pleine," "elliptique," or "implicite." Sometimes she lost herself in the maze, and when so lost, she would, now and then (while Hortense was rummaging her drawers upstairs,—an unaccountable occupation in which she spent a large portion of each day, arranging, disarranging, rearranging and counter-arrang-

ing)—carry her book to Robert in the counting-house, and get the rough place made smooth by his aid. Mr Moore possessed a clear, tranquil brain of his own; almost as soon as he looked at Caroline's little difficulties they seemed to dissolve beneath his eye; in two minutes he would explain all—in two words give the key to the puzzle. She thought if Hortense could only teach like him, how much faster she might learn! Repaying him by an admiring and grateful smile, rather shed at his feet than lifted to his face, she would leave the mill reluctantly to go back to the cottage, and then, while she completed the exercise, or worked out the sum (for Mdlle Moore taught her arithmetic, too), she would wish nature had made her a boy instead of a girl, that she might ask Robert to let her be his clerk, and sit with him in the counting-house, instead of sitting with Hortense in the parlour.

Occasionally—but this happened very rarely—she spent the evening at Hollow's Cottage. Sometimes during these visits, Moore was away, attending a market; sometimes he was gone to Mr Yorke's; often he was engaged with a male visitor in another room; but sometimes, too, he was at home, disengaged, free to talk with Caroline. When this was the case, the evening hours passed on wings of light; they were gone before they were counted. There was no room in England so pleasant as that small parlour when the three cousins occupied it. Hortense, when she was not teaching, or scolding, or cooking, was far from ill-humoured; it was her custom to relax towards evening, and to be kind to her young English kinswoman. There was a means, too, of rendering her delightful, by inducing her to take her guitar and sing and play; she then became quite good-natured; and as she played with skill, and had a well-toned voice, it was not disagreeable to listen to her: it would have been absolutely agreeable, except that her

formal and self-important character modulated her strains, as it impressed her manners and moulded her countenance.

Mr Moore, released from the business-yoke, was, if not lively himself, a willing spectator of Caroline's liveliness, a complacent listener to her talk, a ready respondent to her questions. He was something agreeable to sit near, to hover round, to address and look at. Sometimes he was better than this,—almost animated, quite gentle and friendly.

The drawback was, that by the next morning he was sure to be frozen up again; and however much he seemed, in his quiet way, to enjoy these social evenings, he rarely contrived their recurrence. This circumstance puzzled the inexperienced head of his cousin. "If I had a means of happiness at my command," she thought, "I would employ that means often; I would keep it bright with use, and not let it lie for weeks aside, till its gets rusty."

Yet she was careful not to put in practice her own theory. Much as she liked an evening visit to the cottage, she never paid one unasked. Often, indeed, when pressed by Hortense to come, she would refuse, because Robert did not second, or but slightly seconded the request. This morning was the first time he had ever, of his own unprompted will, given her an invitation; and then he had spoken so kindly, that in hearing him she had received a sense of happiness sufficient to keep her glad for the whole day.

The morning passed as usual. Mademoiselle, ever breathlessly busy, spent it in bustling from kitchen to parlour—now scolding Sarah, now looking over Caroline's exercise or hearing her repetition-lesson. However faultlessly these tasks were achieved, she never commended: it was a maxim with her that praise is inconsistent with a teacher's dignity, and that blame, in

more or less unqualified measure, is indispensable to it. She thought incessant reprimand, severe or slight, quite necessary to the maintenance of her authority; and if no possible error was to be found in the lesson, it was the pupil's carriage, or air, or dress, or mien, which required correction.

The usual affray took place about the dinner, which meal, when Sarah at last brought it into the room, she almost flung upon the table, with a look that expressed quite plainly—"I never dished such stuff i' my life afore; it's not fit for dogs." Notwithstanding Sarah's scorn, it was a savoury repast enough. The soup was a sort of purée of dried peas, which Mademoiselle had prepared amidst bitter lamentations that in this desolate country of England no haricot beans were to be had. Then came a dish of meat—nature unknown, but supposed to be miscellaneous—singularly chopped up with crumbs of bread, seasoned uniquely though not unpleasantly, and baked in a mould; a queer, but by no means unpalatable dish. Greens, oddly bruised, formed the accompanying vegetable; and a pâté of fruit, conserved after a receipt devised by Madame Gérard Moore's "grand'mère," and from the taste of which it appeared probable that "mélasse" had been substituted for sugar, completed the dinner.

Caroline had no objection to this Belgian cookery: indeed, she rather liked it for a change, and it was well she did so, for had she evinced any disrelish thereof, such manifestation would have injured her in Mademoiselle's good graces for ever; a positive crime might have been more easily pardoned than a symptom of distaste for the foreign comestibles.

Soon after dinner Caroline coaxed her governess-cousin upstairs to dress: this manœuvre required management. To have hinted that the jupon, camisole, and curl-papers were odious objects, or indeed other

than quite meritorious points, would have been a felony. Any premature attempt to urge their disappearance was therefore unwise, and would be likely to issue in the persevering wear of them during the whole day. Carefully avoiding rocks and quicksands, however, the pupil, on pretence of requiring a change of scene, contrived to get the teacher aloft, and, once in the bed-room, she persuaded her that it was not worth while returning thither, and that she might as well make her toilette now; and while Mademoiselle delivered a solemn homily on her own surpassing merit in disregarding all frivolities of fashion, Caroline denuded her of the camisole, invested her with a decent gown, arranged her collar, hair, &c., and made her quite presentable. But Hortense would put the finishing touches herself, and these finishing touches consisted in a thick handkerchief tied round the throat, and a large, servant-like black apron, which spoiled everything. On no account would Mademoiselle have appeared in her own house without the thick handkerchief and the voluminous apron: the first was a positive matter of morality—it was quite improper not to wear a fichu; the second was the ensign of a good housewife—she appeared to think that by means of it she somehow effected a large saving in her brother's income. She had, with her own hands, made and presented to Caroline similar equipments; and the only serious quarrel they ever had, and which still left a soreness in the elder cousin's soul, had arisen from the refusal of the younger one to accept of and profit by these elegant presents.

"I wear a high dress and a collar," said Caroline, "and I should feel suffocated with a handkerchief in addition; and my short aprons do quite as well as that very long one: I would rather make no change."

Yet Hortense, by dint of perseverance, would probably have compelled her to make a change, had not Mr

Moore chanced to overhear a dispute on the subject, and decided that Caroline's little aprons would suffice, and that, in his opinion, as she was still but a child, she might for the present dispense with the fichu, especially as her curls were long, and almost touched her shoulders.

There was no appeal against Robert's opinion, therefore his sister was compelled to yield; but she disapproved entirely of the piquant neatness of Caroline's costume, and the ladylike grace of her appearance: something more solid and homely, she would have considered "beaucoup plus convenable."

The afternoon was devoted to sewing. Mademoiselle, like most Belgian ladies, was specially skilful with her needle. She by no means thought it waste of time to devote unnumbered hours to fine embroidery, sight-destroying lace-work, marvellous netting and knitting, and, above all, to most elaborate stocking-mending. She would give a day to the mending of two holes in a stocking any time, and think her "mission" nobly fulfilled when she had accomplished it. It was another of Caroline's troubles to be condemned to learn this foreign style of darning, which was done stitch by stitch, so as exactly to imitate the fabric of the stocking itself; a wearifu' process, but considered by Hortense Gérard, and by her ancestresses before her for long generations back, as one of the first "duties of women." She herself had had a needle, cotton, and a fearfully torn stocking put into her hand while she yet wore a child's coif on her little black head: her "hauts faits" in the darning line had been exhibited to company ere she was six years old, and when she first discovered that Caroline was profoundly ignorant of this most essential of attainments, she could have wept with pity over her miserably neglected youth.

No time did she lose in seeking up a hopeless

pair of hose, of which the heels were entirely gone, and in setting the ignorant English girl to repair the deficiency: this task had been commenced two years ago, and Caroline had the stockings in her work-bag yet. She did a few rows every day, by way of penance for the expiation of her sins: they were a grievous burden to her; she would much have liked to put them in the fire; and once Mr Moore, who had observed her sitting and sighing over them, had proposed a private incremation in the counting-house, but to this proposal Caroline knew it would have been impolitic to accede—the result could only be a fresh pair of hose, probably in worse condition: she adhered, therefore, to the ills she knew.

All the afternoon the two ladies sat and sewed, till the eyes and fingers, and even the spirits of one of them were weary. The sky since dinner had darkened; it had begun to rain again, to pour fast; secret fears began to steal on Caroline that Robert would be persuaded by Mr Sykes or Mr Yorke to remain at Whinbury till it cleared, and of that there appeared no present chance. Five o'clock struck, and time stole on; still the clouds streamed; a sighing wind whispered in the roof-trees of the cottage; day seemed already closing; the parlour-fire shed on the clear hearth a glow ruddy as at twilight.

"It will not be fair till the moon rises," pronounced Mademoiselle Moore; "consequently, I feel assured that my brother will not return till then: indeed, I should be sorry if he did. We will have coffee: it would be vain to wait for him."

"I am tired—may I leave my work now, cousin?"

"You may, since it grows too dark to see to do it well. Fold it up; put it carefully in your bag; then step into the kitchen, and desire Sarah to bring in the goûter, or tea, as you call it."

"But it has not yet struck six: he may still come."

"He will not, I tell you. I can calculate his movements. I understand my brother."

Suspense is irksome, disappointment bitter. All the world has, some time or other, felt that. Caroline, obedient to orders, passed into the kitchen. Sarah was making a dress for herself at the table.

"You are to bring in coffee," said the young lady, in a spiritless tone; and then she leaned her arm and head against the kitchen mantelpiece, and hung listlessly over the fire.

"How low you seem, miss! But it's all because your cousin keeps you so close to work. It's a shame!"

"Nothing of the kind, Sarah," was the brief reply.

"Oh! but I know it is. You're fit to cry just this minute, for nothing else but because you've sat still the whole day. It would make a kitten dull to be mewed up so."

"Sarah, does your master often come home early from market when it is wet?"

"Never, hardly; but just to-day, for some reason, he has made a difference."

"What do you mean?"

"He is come: I am certain I saw Murgatroyd lead his horse into the yard by the back-way, when I went to get some water at the pump five minutes since. He was in the counting-house with Joe Scott, I believe."

"You are mistaken."

"What should I be mistaken for? I know his horse surely?"

"But you did not see himself?"

"I heard him speak, though. He was saying something to Joe Scott about having settled all concerning ways and means, and that there would be a new set of frames in the mill before another week passed; and that

this time he would get four soldiers from Stilbro' barracks to guard the waggon."

"Sarah, are you making a gown?"

"Yes: is it a handsome one?"

"Beautiful! Get the coffee ready. I'll finish cutting out that sleeve for you; and I'll give you some trimming for it. I have some narrow satin ribbon of a colour that will just match it."

"You're very kind, miss."

"Be quick, there's a good girl; but first put your master's shoes on the hearth: he will take his boots off when he comes in. I hear him—he is coming."

"Miss! you're cutting the stuff wrong."

"So I am; but it is only a snip: there is no harm done."

The kitchen-door opened; Mr Moore entered, very wet and cold. Caroline half turned from her dress-making occupation, but renewed it for a moment, as if to gain a minute's time for some purpose. Bent over the dress, her face was hidden; there was an attempt to settle her features and veil their expression, which failed: when she at last met Mr Moore, her countenance beamed.

"We had ceased to expect you: they asserted you would not come," she said.

"But I promised to return soon: *you* expected me, I suppose?"

"No, Robert: I dared not when it rained so fast. And you are wet and chilled—change everything! if you took cold, I should—we should blame ourselves in some measure."

"I am not wet through: my riding-coat is water-proof. Dry shoes are all I require.—There . . . the fire is pleasant after facing the cold wind and rain for a few miles."

He stood on the kitchen hearth; Caroline stood

beside him. Mr Moore, while enjoying the genial glow, kept his eyes directed towards the glittering brasses on the shelf above. Chancing for an instant to look down, his glance rested on an upturned face, flushed, smiling, happy, shaded with silky curls, lit with fine eyes. Sarah was gone into the parlour with the tray: a lecture from her mistress detained her there. Moore placed his hand a moment on his young cousin's shoulder, stooped, and left a kiss on her forehead.

"Oh!" said she, as if the action had unsealed her lips, "I was miserable when I thought you would not come: I am almost too happy now. Are you happy, Robert? Do you like to come home?"

"I think I do; to-night, at least."

"Are you certain you are not fretting about your frames, and your business, and the war?"

"Not just now."

"Are you positive you don't feel Hollow's Cottage too small for you, and narrow and dismal?"

"At this moment, no."

"Can you affirm that you are not bitter at heart because rich and great people forget you?"

"No more questions. You are mistaken if you think I am anxious to curry favour with rich and great people. I only want means—a position—a career."

"Which your own talent and goodness shall win you. You were made to be great—you *shall* be great."

"I wonder now, if you spoke honestly out of your heart, what receipt you would give me for acquiring this same greatness; but I know it—better than you know it yourself. Would it be efficacious? would it work? Yes—poverty, misery, bankruptcy. Oh! life is not what you think it, Lina!"

"But you are what I think you."

"I am not."

"You are better, then?"

"Far worse."

"No; far better. I know you are good."

"How do you know it?"

"You look so; and I feel you *are* so."

"Where do you feel it?"

"In my heart."

"Ah! you judge me with your heart, Lina: you should judge me with your head."

"I do; and then I am quite proud of you. Robert, you cannot tell all my thoughts about you."

Mr Moore's dark face mustered colour; his lips smiled, and yet were compressed; his eyes laughed, and yet he resolutely knit his brow.

"Think meanly of me, Lina," said he. "Men, in general, are a sort of scum, very different to anything of which you have an idea; I make no pretension to be better than my fellows."

"If you did, I should not esteem you so much; it is because you are modest that I have such confidence in your merit."

"Are you flattering me?" he demanded, turning sharply upon her, and searching her face with an eye of acute penetration.

"No," she said softly, laughing at his sudden quickness. She seemed to think it unnecessary to proffer any eager disavowal of the charge.

"You don't care whether I think you flatter me or not?"

"No."

"You are so secure of your own intentions:"

"I suppose so."

"What are they, Caroline?"

"Only to ease my mind by expressing for once part of what I think; and then to make you better satisfied with yourself."

"By assuring me that my kinswoman is my sincere friend?"

"Just so; I am your sincere friend, Robert."

"And I am—what chance and change shall make me, Lina."

"Not my enemy, however?"

The answer was cut short by Sarah and her mistress entering the kitchen together in some commotion. They had been improving the time which Mr Moore and Miss Helstone had spent in dialogue by a short dispute on the subject of "café au lait," which Sarah said was the queerest mess she ever saw, and a waste of God's good gifts, as it was "the nature of coffee to be boiled in water;" and which Mademoiselle affirmed to be "un breuvage royal," a thousand times too good for the mean person who objected to it.

The former occupants of the kitchen now withdrew into the parlour. Before Hortense followed them thither, Caroline had only time again to question, "Not my enemy, Robert?" And Moore, Quaker like, had replied with another query, "Could I be?" and then, seating himself at the table, had settled Caroline at his side.

Caroline scarcely heard Mademoiselle's explosion of wrath when she rejoined them; the long declamation about the "conduite indigne de cette méchante créature," sounded in her ear as confusedly as the agitated rattling of the china. Robert laughed a little at it, in very subdued sort, and then, politely and calmly entreating his sister to be tranquil, assured her that if it would yield her any satisfaction, she should have her choice of an attendant among all the girls in his mill; only he feared they would scarcely suit her, as they were most of them, he was informed, completely ignorant of household work: and pert and self-willed as Sarah was, she was, perhaps, no worse than the majority of the women of her class.

Mademoiselle admitted the truth of this conjecture: according to her, "ces paysannes Angaises étaient tout insupportables." What would she not give for some "bonne cuisinière Anversoise," with the high cap, short petticoat, and decent sabots proper to her class: something better, indeed, than an insolent coquette in a flounced gown and absolutely without cap! (for Sarah, it appears, did not partake the opinion of St Paul, that "it is a shame for a woman to go with her head uncovered;" but, holding rather a contrary doctrine, resolutely refused to imprison in linen or muslin the plentiful tresses of her yellow hair, which it was her wont to fasten up smartly with a comb behind, and on Sundays to wear curled in front.)

"Shall I try and get you an Antwerp girl?" asked Mr Moore, who—stern in public—was on the whole very kind in private.

"Merci du cadeau!" was the answer. "An Antwerp girl would not stay here ten days, sneered at as she would be by all the young coquines in your factory;" then softening, "You are very good, dear brother—excuse my petulance—but truly, my domestic trials are severe, yet they are probably my destiny; for I recollect that our revered mother experienced similar sufferings, though she had the choice of all the best servants in Antwerp; domestics are in all countries a spoiled and unruly set."

Mr Moore had also certain reminiscences about the trials of his revered mother. A good mother she had been to him, and he honoured her memory, but he recollected that she kept a hot kitchen of it in Antwerp, just as his faithful sister did here in England. Thus, therefore, he let the subject drop, and when the coffee-service was removed, proceeded to console Hortense by fetching her music-book and guitar; and, having arranged the ribbon of the instrument round her neck

with a quiet fraternal kindness he knew to be all-powerful in soothing her most ruffled moods, he asked her to give him some of their mother's favourite songs.

Nothing refines like affection. Family jarring vulgarises — family union elevates. Hortense, pleased with her brother, and grateful to him, looked, as she touched her guitar, almost graceful, almost handsome; her every-day fretful look was gone for a moment, and was replaced by a "sourire plein de bonté." She sang the songs he asked for, with feeling; they reminded her of a parent to whom she had been truly attached; they reminded her of her young days. She observed, too, that Caroline listened with naïve interest; this augmented her good-humour; and the exclamation at the close of the song, "I wish I could sing and play like Hortense!" achieved the business, and rendered her charming for the evening.

It is true, a little lecture to Caroline followed, on the vanity of *wishing*, and the duty of *trying*. "As Rome," it was suggested, "had not been built in a day, so neither had Mademoiselle Gèrard Moore's education been completed in a week, or by merely *wishing* to be clever. It was effort that had accomplished that great work: she was ever remarkable for her perseverance, for her industry: her masters had remarked that it was as delightful as it was uncommon to find so much talent united with so much solidity, and so on." Once on the theme of her own merits, Mademoiselle was fluent.

Cradled at last in blissful self-complacency, she took her knitting, and sat down tranquil. Drawn curtains, a clear fire, a softly shining lamp, gave now to the little parlour its best—its evening charm. It is probable that the three there present felt this charm: they all looked happy.

"What shall we do now, Caroline?" asked Mr Moore, returning to his seat beside his cousin.

"What shall we do, Robert?" repeated she playfully. "You decide."

"Not play at chess?"

"No."

"Nor draughts, nor backgammon?"

"No—no; we both hate silent games that only keep one's hands employed, don't we?"

"I believe we do; then, shall we talk scandal?"

"About whom? Are we sufficiently interested in anybody to take a pleasure in pulling their character to pieces?"

"A question that comes to the point. For my part —unamiable as it sounds—I must say, no."

"And I, too. But it is strange—though we want no third—fourth, I mean (she hastily and with contrition glanced at Hortense), living person among us—so selfish we are in our happiness—though we don't want to think of the present existing world, it would be pleasant to go back to the past; to hear people that have slept for generations in graves that are perhaps no longer graves now, but gardens and fields, speak to us and tell us their thoughts, and impart their ideas."

"Who shall be the speaker? What language shall he utter? French?"

"Your French forefathers don't speak so sweetly, nor so solemnly, nor so impressively as your English ancestors, Robert. To-night you shall be entirely English: you shall read an English book."

"An old English book?"

"Yes, an old English book, one that you like; and I will choose a part of it that is toned quite in harmony with something in you. It shall waken your nature, fill your mind with music: it shall pass like a skilful hand over your heart, and make its strings sound.

Your heart is a lyre, Robert; but the lot of your life has not been a minstrel to sweep it, and it is often silent. Let glorious William come near and touch it: you will see how he will draw the English power and melody out of its chords."

"I must read Shakspeare?"

"You must have his spirit before you; you must hear his voice with your mind's ear; you must take some of his soul into yours."

"With a view to making me better; is it to operate like a sermon?"

"It is to stir you; to give you new sensations. It is to make you feel your life strongly, not only your virtues, but your vicious, perverse points."

"Dieu! que dit-elle?" cried Hortense, who hitherto had been counting stitches in her knitting, and had not much attended to what was said, but whose ear these two strong words caught with a tweak.

"Never mind her, sister: let her talk; now just let her say anything she pleases to-night. She likes to come down hard upon your brother sometimes; it amuses me, so let her alone."

Caroline, who, mounted on a chair, had been rummaging the book-case, returned with a book.

"Here's Shakspeare," she said, "and there's Coriolanus. Now, read, and discover by the feelings the reading will give you at once how low and how high you are."

"Come then, sit near me, and correct when I mispronounce."

"I am to be the teacher then, and you my pupil?"

"Ainsi, soit-il!"

"And Shakspeare is our science, since we are going to study?"

"It appears so."

"And you are not going to be French, sceptical, and

sneering? You are not going to think it a sign of wisdom to refuse to admire?"

"I don't know."

"If you do, Robert, I'll take Shakspeare away; and I'll shrivel up within myself, and put on my bonnet and go home."

"Sit down; here I begin."

"One minute, if you please, brother," interrupted Mademoiselle, "when the gentleman of a family reads, the ladies should always sew. Caroline, dear child, take your embroidery: you may get three sprigs done to-night."

Caroline looked dismayed. "I can't see by lamplight; my eyes are tired, and I can't do two things well at once. If I sew, I cannot listen; if I listen, I cannot sew."

"Fi, donc! Quel enfantillage!" began Hortense. Mr Moore, as usual, suavely interposed.

"Permit her to neglect the embroidery for this evening. I wish her whole attention to be fixed on my accent, and to ensure this, she must follow the reading with her eyes; she must look at the book."

He placed it between them, reposed his arm on the back of Caroline's chair, and thus began to read.

The very first scene in "Coriolanus" came with smart relish to his intellectual palate, and still as he read he warmed. He delivered the haughty speech of Caius Marcius to the starving citizens with unction; he did not say he thought his irrational pride right, but he seemed to feel it so. Caroline looked up at him with a singular smile.

"There's a vicious point hit already," she said; "you sympathise with that proud patrician who does not sympathise with his famished fellow-men, and insults them: there, go on." He proceeded. The warlike portions did not rouse him much; he said all

that was out of date, or should be; the spirit displayed was barbarous, yet the encounter single-handed between Marcius and Tullus Aufidius he delighted in. As he advanced, he forgot to criticise; it was evident he appreciated the power, the truth of each portion; and, stepping out of the narrow line of private prejudices, began to revel in the large picture of human nature, to feel the reality stamped upon the characters who were speaking from that page before him.

He did not read the comic scenes well, and Caroline, taking the book out of his hand, read these parts for him. From her he seemed to enjoy them, and indeed she gave them with a spirit no one could have expected of her, with a pithy expression with which she seemed gifted on the spot, and for that brief moment only. It may be remarked, in passing, that the general character of her conversation that evening, whether serious or sprightly, grave or gay, was as of something untaught, unstudied, intuitive, fitful; when once gone, no more to be reproduced as it had been, than the glancing ray of the meteor, than the tints of the dew-gem, than the colour or form of the sunset cloud, than the fleeting and glittering ripple varying the flow of a rivulet.

Coriolanus in glory; Coriolanus in disaster; Coriolanus banished, followed like giant shades one after the other. Before the vision of the banished man, Moore's spirit seemed to pause. He stood on the hearth of Aufidius's hall, facing the image of greatness fallen, but greater than ever in that low estate. He saw "the grim appearance," the dark face "bearing command in it," "the noble vessel with its tackle torn." With the revenge of Caius Marcius, Moore perfectly sympathised; he was not scandalised by it; and again Caroline whispered, "There I see another glimpse of brotherhood in error."

The march on Rome, the mother's supplication, the

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long resistance, the final yielding of bad passions to good, which ever must be the case in a nature worthy the epithet of noble, the rage of Aufidius at what he considered his ally's weakness, the death of Coriolanus, the final sorrow of his great enemy; all scenes made of condensed truth and strength, came on in succession and carried with them in their deep, fast flow, the heart and mind of reader and listener.

"Now, have you felt Shakespeare?" asked Caroline, some ten minutes after her cousin had closed the book.

"I think so."

"And have you felt anything in Coriolanus like you?"

"Perhaps I have."

"Was he not faulty as well as great?"

Moore nodded. "And what was his fault? What made him hated by the citizens? What caused him to be banished by his countrymen?"

"What do you think it was?"

"I ask again—

> 'Whether was it pride,
> Which out of daily fortune ever taints
> The happy man? whether defect of judgment,
> To fail in the disposing of those chances
> Which he was lord of? or whether nature,
> Not to be other than one thing; not moving
> From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace
> Even with the same austerity and garb
> As he controlled the war?'"

"Well, answer yourself, Sphynx."

"It was a spice of all; and you must not be proud to your workpeople; you must not neglect chances of soothing them, and you must not be of an inflexible nature, uttering a request as austerely as if it were a command."

"That is the moral you tack to the play. What puts such notions into your head?"

"A wish for your good, a care for your safety, dear Robert, and a fear caused by many things which I have heard lately, that you will come to harm."

"Who tells you these things?"

"I hear my uncle talk about you: he praises your hard spirit, your determined cast of mind, your scorn of low enemies, your resolution not 'to truckle to the mob,' as he says."

"And would you have me truckle to them?"

"No, not for the world: I never wish you to lower yourself; but somehow, I cannot help thinking it unjust to include all poor working people under the general and insulting name of 'the mob,' and continually to think of them and treat them haughtily."

"You are a little democrat, Caroline: if your uncle knew, what would he say?"

"I rarely talk to my uncle, as you know, and never about such things: he thinks everything but sewing and cooking above women's comprehension, and out of their line."

"And do you fancy you comprehend the subjects on which you advise me?"

"As far as they concern you, I comprehend them. I know it would be better for you to be loved by your workpeople than to be hated by them, and I am sure that kindness is more likely to win their regard than pride. If you were proud and cold to me and Hortense, should we love you? When you are cold to me, as you *are* sometimes, can I venture to be affectionate in return?"

"Now, Lina, I've had my lesson both in languages and ethics, with a touch on politics; it is your turn. Hortense tells me you were much taken by a little piece of poetry you learned the other day, a piece by poor André Chénier—'La Jeune Captive;' do you remember it still?'

"I think so."

"Repeat it, then. Take your time and mind your accent: especially let us have no English *u*'s."

Caroline, beginning in a low, rather tremulous voice, but gaining courage as she proceeded, repeated the sweet verses of Chénier; the last three stanzas she rehearsed well.

"Mon beau voyage encore est si loin de sa fin!
Je pars, et des ormeaux qui bordent le chemin
J'ai passé le premiers à peine.
Au banquet de la vie à peine commencé,
Un instant seulement mes lèvres ont pressé
La coupe en mes mains encore pleine.

Je ne suis qu'au printemps—je veux voir la moisson;
Ex comme le soleil, de saison en saison,
Je veux achever mon année.
Brillante sur ma tige, et l'honneur du jardin
Je n'ai vu luire encore que les feux du matin,
Je veux achever ma journée!"

Moore listened at first with his eyes cast down, but soon he furtively raised them: leaning back in his chair, he could watch Caroline without her perceiving where his gaze was fixed. Her cheek had a colour, her eyes a light, her countenance an expression, this evening, which would have made even plain features striking: but there was not the grievous defect of plainness to pardon in her case. The sunshine was not shed on rough barrenness; it fell on soft bloom. Each lineament was turned with grace; the whole aspect was pleasing. At the present moment—animated, interested, touched—she might be called beautiful. Such a face was calculated to awaken not only the calm sentiment of esteem, the distant one of admiration; but some feeling more tender, genial, intimate: friendship, perhaps—affection, interest. When she had finished, she turned to Moore, and met his eye.

"Is that pretty well repeated?" she inquired, smiling like any happy, docile child.

"I really don't know."

"Why don't you know? Have you not listened?"

"Yes—and looked. You are fond of poetry, Lina?"

"When I meet with *real* poetry, I cannot rest till I have learned it by heart, and so made it partly mine."

Mr Moore now sat silent for several minutes. It struck nine o'clock: Sarah entered, and said that Mr Helstone's servant was come for Miss Caroline.

"Then the evening is gone already," she observed; "and it will be long, I suppose, before I pass another here."

Hortense had been for some time nodding over her knitting; fallen into a doze now, she made no response to the remark.

"You would have no objections to come here oftener of an evening?" inquired Robert, as he took her folded mantle from the side-table, where it still lay, and carefully wrapped it round her.

"I like to come here; but I have no desire to be intrusive. I am not hinting to be asked: you must understand that."

"Oh! I understand thee, child. You sometimes lecture me for wishing to be rich, Lina; but if I *were* rich, you should live here always: at any rate, you should live with me wherever my habitation might be."

"That would be pleasant; and if you were poor—ever so poor—it would still be pleasant. Good-night, Robert."

"I promised to walk with you up to the Rectory."

"I know you did; but I thought you had forgotten, and I hardly knew how to remind you, though I wished to do it. But would you like to go? It is a cold night; and, as Fanny is come, there is no necessity"——

"Here is your muff—don't wake Hortense—come."

The half-mile to the Rectory was soon traversed. They parted in the garden without kiss, scarcely with a pressure of hands: yet Robert sent his cousin in excited and joyously troubled. He had been singularly kind to her that day: not in phrase, compliment, profession; but in manner, in look, and in soft and friendly tones.

For himself, he came home grave, almost morose. As he stood leaning on his own yard-gate, musing in the watery moonlight all alone—the hushed, dark mill before him, the hill-environed hollow round—he exclaimed, abruptly—

"This won't do! There's weakness—there's downright ruin in all this. However," he added, dropping his voice, "the frenzy is quite temporary. I know it very well: I have had it before. It will be gone tomorrow."

Chapter bij.

THE CURATES AT TEA.

CAROLINE HELSTONE was just eighteen years old; and at eighteen the true narrative of life is yet to be commenced. Before that time, we sit listening to a tale, a marvellous fiction; delightful sometimes, and sad sometimes; almost always unreal. Before that time, our world is heroic; its inhabitants half-divine or semi-demon; its scenes are dream-scenes: darker woods and stranger hills; brighter skies, more dangerous waters; sweeter flowers, more tempting fruits: wider plains, drearier deserts, sunnier fields than are found in nature, overspread our enchanted globe. What a moon we gaze on before that time! How the trembling of our hearts at her aspect bears witness to its

unutterable beauty! As to our sun, it is a burning heaven —the world of gods.

At that time—at eighteen, drawing near the confines of illusive, void dreams, Elf-land lies behind us, the shores of Reality rise in front. These shores are yet distant: they look so blue, soft, gentle, we long to reach them. In sunshine we see a greenness beneath the azure, as of spring meadows; we catch glimpses of silver lines, and imagine the roll of living waters. Could we but reach this land, we think to hunger and thirst no more: whereas many a wilderness, and often the flood of Death, or some stream of sorrow as cold and almost as black as Death, is to be crossed ere true bliss can be tasted. Every joy that life gives must be earned ere it is secured; and how hardly earned, those only know who have wrestled for great prizes. The heart's blood must gem with red beads the brow of the combatant, before the wreath of victory rustles over it.

At eighteen, we are not aware of this. Hope, when she smiles on us, and promises happiness to-morrow, is implicitly believed;—Love, when he comes wandering like a lost angel to our door, is at once admitted, welcomed, embraced: his quiver is not seen; if his arrows penetrate, their wound is like a thrill of new life: there are no fears of poison, none of the barb which no leech's hand can extract: that perilous passion—an agony ever in some of its phases; with many, an agony throughout —is believed to be an unqualified good: in short, at eighteen, the school of Experience is to be entered, and her humbling, crushing, grinding, but yet purifying and invigorating lessons are yet to be learnt.

Alas, Experience! No other mentor has so wasted and frozen a face as yours: none wears a robe so black, none bears a rod so heavy, none with hand so inexorable draws the novice so sternly to his task, and forces him with authority so resistless to its acquirement. It is by

your instructions alone that man or woman can ever find a safe track through life's wilds; without it, how they stumble, how they stray! On what forbidden grounds do they intrude, down what dread declivities are they hurled!

Caroline, having been convoyed home by Robert, had no wish to pass what remained of the evening with her uncle: the room in which he sat was very sacred ground to her; she seldom intruded on it, and to-night she kept aloof till the bell rung for prayers. Part of the evening Church service was the form of worship observed in Mr Helstone's household: he read it in his usual nasal voice, clear, loud, and monotonous. The rite over, his niece, according to her wont, stepped up to him.

"Good-night, uncle."

"Hey! You've been gadding abroad all day—visiting, dining out, and what not!"

"Only at the cottage."

"And have you learnt your lessons?"

"Yes."

"And made a shirt?"

"Only part of one."

"Well, that will do: stick to the needle—learn shirt-making and gown-making, and pie-crust-making, and you'll be a clever woman some day. Go to bed now; I'm busy with a pamphlet here."

Presently the niece was enclosed in her small bedroom; the door bolted, her white dressing-gown assumed, her long hair loosened and falling thick, soft, and wavy to her waist; and as, resting from the task of combing it out, she leaned her cheek on her hand and fixed her eyes on the carpet, before her rose, and close around her drew, the visions we see at eighteen years.

Her thoughts were speaking with her: speaking pleasantly, as it seemed, for she smiled as she listened. She looked pretty, meditating thus: but a brighter thing

than she was in that apartment—the spirit of youthful Hope. According to this flattering prophet, she was to know disappointment, to feel chill no more: she had entered on the dawn of a summer day—no false dawn, but the true spring of morning—and her sun would quickly rise. Impossible for her now to suspect that she was the sport of delusion: her expectations seemed warranted, the foundation on which they rested appeared solid.

"When people love, the next step is they marry," was her argument. "Now, I love Robert, and I feel sure that Robert loves me: I have thought so many a time before; to-day I *felt* it. When I looked up at him after repeating Chénier's poem, his eyes (what handsome eyes he has!) sent the truth through my heart. Sometimes I am afraid to speak to him, lest I should be too frank, lest I should seem forward: for I have more than once regretted bitterly, overflowing, superfluous words, and feared I had said more than he expected me to say, and that he would disapprove what he might deem my indiscretion; now, to-night, I could have ventured to express any thought, he was so indulgent. How kind he was, as we walked up the lane! He does not flatter or say foolish things; his love-making (friendship, I mean: of course I don't yet account him my lover, but I hope he will be so some day) is not like what we read of in books—it is far better—original, quiet, manly, sincere. I *do* like him: I would be an excellent wife to him if he did marry me: I would tell him of his faults (for he has a few faults), but I would study his comfort, and cherish him, and do my best to make him happy. Now, I am sure he will not be cold to-morrow: I feel almost certain that to-morrow evening he will either come here, or ask me to go there."

She recommenced combing her hair, long as a mer-

maid's; turning her head, as she arranged it, she saw her own face and form in the glass. Such reflections are soberising to plain people: their own eyes are not enchanted with the image; they are confident then that the eyes of others can see in it no fascination; but the fair must naturally draw other conclusions: the picture is charming, and must charm. Caroline saw a shape, a head, that daguerreotyped in that attitude and with that expression, would have been lovely: she could not choose but derive from the spectacle confirmation to her hopes: it was then in undiminished gladness she sought her couch.

And in undiminished gladness she rose the next day: as she entered her uncle's breakfast-room, and with soft cheerfulness wished him good-morning, even that little man of bronze himself thought, for an instant, his niece was growing "a fine girl." Generally she was quiet and timid with him: very docile, but not communicative; this morning, however, she found many things to say. Slight topics alone might be discussed between them; for with a woman—a girl—Mr Helstone would touch on no other. She had taken an early walk in the garden, and she told him what flowers were beginning to spring there; she inquired when the gardener was to come and trim the borders; she informed him that certain starlings were beginning to build their nests in the church-tower (Briarfield church was close to Briarfield rectory); she wondered the tolling of the bells in the belfry did not scare them.

Mr Helstone opined that "they were like other fools who had just paired; insensible to inconvenience just for the moment." Caroline, made perhaps a little too courageous by her temporary good spirits, here hazarded a remark of a kind she had never before ventured to make on observations dropped by her revered relative.

"Uncle," said she, "whenever you speak of marriage,

you speak of it scornfully: do you think people shouldn't marry?"

"It is decidedly the wisest plan to remain single, especially for women."

"Are all marriages unhappy?"

"Millions of marriages are unhappy: if everybody confessed the truth, perhaps all are more or less so."

"You are always vexed when you are asked to come and marry a couple—why?"

"Because one does not like to act as accessory to the commission of a piece of pure folly."

Mr Helstone spoke so readily, he seemed rather glad of the opportunity to give his niece a piece of his mind on this point. Emboldened by the impunity which had hitherto attended her questions, she went a little further—

"But why," said she, "should it be pure folly? If two people like each other, why shouldn't they consent to live together?"

"They tire of each other—they tire of each other in a month. A yokefellow is not a companion; he or she is a fellow-sufferer."

It was by no means naïve simplicity which inspired Caroline's next remark: it was a sense of antipathy to such opinions, and of displeasure at him who held them.

"One would think you had never been married, uncle: one would think you were an old bachelor."

"Practically, I am so."

"But you have been married. Why were you so inconsistent as to marry?"

"Every man is mad once or twice in his life."

"So you tired of my aunt, and my aunt of you, and you were miserable together?"

Mr Helstone pushed out his cynical lip, wrinkled his brown forehead and gave an inarticulate grunt.

"Did she not suit you? Was she not good-tempered? Did you not get used to her? Were you not sorry when she died?"

"Caroline," said Mr Helstone, bringing his hand slowly down to within an inch or two of the table, and then smiting it suddenly on the mahogany, "understand this: it is vulgar and puerile to confound generals with particulars: in every case, there is the rule, and there are the exceptions. Your questions are stupid and babyish. Ring the bell, if you have done breakfast."

The breakfast was taken away, and that meal over, it was the general custom of uncle and niece to separate, and not to meet again till dinner; but to-day the niece, instead of quitting the room, went to the window-seat, and sat down there. Mr Helstone looked round uneasily once or twice, as if he wished her away, but she was gazing from the window, and did not seem to mind him; so he continued the perusal of his morning paper—a particularly interesting one it chanced to be, as new movements had just taken place in the Peninsula, and certain columns of the journal were rich in long despatches from General Lord Wellington. He little knew, meantime, what thoughts were busy in his niece's mind—thoughts the conversation of the past half-hour had revived, but not generated; tumultuous were they now, as disturbed bees in a hive, but it was years since they had first made their cells in her brain.

She was reviewing his character, his disposition, repeating his sentiments on marriage. Many a time had she reviewed them before, and sounded the gulf between her own mind and his; and then, on the other side of the wide and deep chasm, she had seen, and she now saw, another figure standing beside her uncle's—a strange shape; dim, sinister, scarcely earthly: the half-remembered image of her own father, James Helstone, Matthewson Helstone's brother.

Rumours had reached her ear of what that father's character was; old servants had dropped hints: she knew, too, that he was not a good man, and that he was never kind to her. She recollected—a dark recollection it was—some weeks that she had spent with him in a great town somewhere, when she had had no maid to dress her or take care of her; when she had been shut up, day and night, in a high garret-room, without a carpet, with a bare uncurtained bed, and scarcely any other furniture; when he went out early every morning, and often forgot to return and give her her dinner during the day, and at night, when he came back, was like a madman, furious, terrible; or—still more painful—like an idiot, imbecile, senseless. She knew she had fallen ill in this place, and that one night when she was very sick, he had come raving into the room, and said he would kill her, for she was a burden to him; her screams had brought aid, and from the moment she was then rescued from him she had never seen him, except as a dead man in his coffin.

That was her father: also she had a mother; though Mr Helstone never spoke to her of that mother; though she could not remember having seen her: but that she was alive she knew. This mother was then the drunkard's wife: what had *their* marriage been? Caroline, turning from the lattice whence she had been watching the starlings (though without seeing them), in a low voice, and with a sad bitter tone, thus broke the silence of the room—

"You term marriage miserable, I suppose, from what you saw of my father and mother's. If my mother suffered what I suffered when I was with papa, she must have had a dreadful life."

Mr Helstone, thus addressed, wheeled about in his chair, and looked over his spectacles at his niece: he was taken aback.

Her father and mother! What had put it into her head to mention her father and mother, of whom he had never, during the twelve years she had lived with him, spoken to her? That the thoughts were self-matured; that she had any recollections or speculations about her parents, he could not fancy.

"Your father and mother? Who has been talking to you about them?"

"Nobody; but I remember something of what papa was, and I pity mamma. Where is she?"

This "Where is she?" had been on Caroline's lips hundreds of times before; but till now she had never uttered it.

"I hardly know," returned Mr Helstone; "I was little acquainted with her. I have not heard from her for years: but wherever she is, she thinks nothing of you; she never inquires about you; I have reason to believe she does not wish to see you. Come, it is school-time: you go to your cousin at ten, don't you? The clock has struck."

Perhaps Caroline would have said more; but Fanny coming in, informed her master that the churchwardens wanted to speak to him in the vestry. He hastened to join them, and his niece presently set out for the cottage.

The road from the Rectory to Hollow's Mill inclined downwards; she ran, therefore, almost all the way. Exercise, the fresh air, the thought of seeing Robert, at least of being on his premises, in his vicinage, revived her somewhat depressed spirits quickly. Arriving in sight of the white house, and within hearing of the thundering mill and its rushing watercourse, the first thing she saw was Moore at his garden-gate. There he stood; in his belted Holland blouse, a light cap covering his head, which undress costume suited him: he was looking down the lane, not in the direc-

tion of his cousin's approach. She stopped, withdrawing a little behind a willow, and studied his appearance.

"He has not his peer," she thought; "he is as handsome as he is intelligent. What a keen eye he has! What clearly cut, spirited features—thin and serious, but graceful! I do like his face—I do like his aspect—I do like him so much! Better than any of these shuffling curates, for instance—better than anybody: bonnie Robert!"

She sought "bonnie Robert's" presence speedily. For his part, when she challenged his sight, I believe he would have passed from before her eyes like a phantom, if he could; but being a tall fact, and no fiction, he was obliged to stand the greeting. He made it brief: it was cousin-like, brother-like, friend-like, anything but lover-like. The nameless charm of last night had left his manner: he was no longer the same man; or, at any rate, the same heart did not beat in his breast.

Rude disappointment! sharp cross! At first the eager girl would not believe in the change, though she saw and felt it. It was difficult to withdraw her hand from his, till he had bestowed at least something like a kind pressure; it was difficult to turn her eyes from his eyes, till his looks had expressed something more and fonder than that cool welcome.

A lover masculine so disappointed can speak and urge explanation; a lover feminine can say nothing; if she did, the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery. Nature would brand such demonstration as a rebellion against her instincts, and would vindictively repay it afterwards by the thunderbolt of self-contempt smiting suddenly in secret. Take the matter as you find it: ask no questions; utter no remonstrances: it is your best wisdom. You expected bread, and you have got a stone; break your teeth on it, and don't shriek because the nerves are martyrised:

do not doubt that your mental stomach—if you
such a thing—is strong as an ostrich's: the ston
digest. You held out your hand for an egg, an
put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation:
your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting th
your palm. Never mind: in time, after your han
arm have swelled and quivered long with tortu
squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have l
the great lesson how to endure without a sob. F
whole remnant of your life, if you survive the
some, it is said, die under it—you will be str
wiser, less sensitive. This you are not awa
perhaps, at the time, and so cannot borrow cour
that hope. Nature, however, as has been intii
is an excellent friend in such cases; sealin
lips, interdicting utterance, commanding a placi
simulation: a dissimulation often wearing an ea
gay mien at first, settling down to sorrow and p
in time, then passing away, and leaving a con
stoicism, not the less fortifying because it is half-b

Half-bitter! Is that wrong? No—it shou
bitter: bitterness is strength—it is a tonic.
mild force following acute suffering, you find nov
to talk of it is delusion. There may be apathet
haustion after the rack; if energy remains, it
rather a dangerous energy—deadly when conf
with injustice.

Who has read the ballad of "Puir Mary Lee
that old Scotch ballad, written I know not in
generation nor by what hand. Mary had been i
—probably in being made to believe that truth
was falsehood: she is not complaining, but she is
alone in the snow-storm, and you hear her thc
They are not the thoughts of a model-heroine unc
circumstances, but they are those of a deeply-f
strongly-resentful peasant-girl. Anguish has

her from the ingle-nook of home, to the white-shrouded and icy hills: crouched under the "cauld drift," she recalls every image of horror,—"the yellow-wymed ask," "the hairy adder," "the auld moon-bowing tyke," "the ghaist at e'en," "the sour bullister," "the milk on the taed's back:" she hates these, "but waur she hates Robin-a-Ree!"

"Oh! ance I lived happily by yon bonny burn—
The warld was in love wi' me;
But now I maun sit 'neath the cauld drift and mourn,
And curse black Robin-a-Ree!

Then whudder awa', thou bitter biting blast,
And sough through the scrunty tree,
And smoor me up in the snaw fu' fast,
And ne'er let the sun me see!

Oh, never melt awa' thou wreath o' snaw,
That's sae kind in graving me;
But hide me frae the scorn and gufflaw
O' villains like Robin-a-Ree!"

But what has been said in the last page or two is not germane to Caroline Helstone's feelings, or to the state of things between her and Robert Moore. Robert had done her no wrong; he had told her no lie; it was she that was to blame, if any one was: what bitterness her mind distilled should and would be poured on her own head. She had loved without being asked to love,—a natural, sometimes an inevitable chance, but big with misery.

Robert, indeed, had sometimes seemed to be fond of her—but why? Because she had made herself so pleasing to him, he could not, in spite of all his efforts, help testifying a state of feeling his judgment did not approve, nor his will sanction. He was about to withdraw decidedly from intimate communication with her, because he did not choose to have his affections inextricably entangled, nor to be drawn, despite his reason,

into a marriage he believed imprudent. Now, what was she to do?—to give way to her feelings, or to vanquish them? To pursue him, or to turn upon herself? If she is weak, she will try the first expedient,—will lose his esteem and win his aversion: if she has sense, she will be her own governor, and resolve to subdue and bring under guidance the disturbed realm of her emotions. She will determine to look on life steadily, as it is; to begin to learn its severe truths seriously, and to study its knotty problems closely, conscientiously.

It appeared she had a little sense, for she quitted Robert quietly, without complaint or question—without the alteration of a muscle or the shedding of a tear—betook herself to her studies under Hortense as usual, and at dinner-time went home without lingering.

When she had dined, and found herself in the Rectory drawing-room alone, having left her uncle over his temperate glass of port wine, the difficulty that occurred to and embarrassed her, was—"How am I to get through this day?"

Last night she had hoped it would be spent as yesterday was,—that the evening would be again passed with Happiness and Robert: she had learned her mistake this morning, and yet she could not settle down, convinced that no chance would occur to recall her to Hollow's Cottage, or to bring Moore again into her society.

He had walked up after tea, more than once, to pass an hour with her uncle: the door-bell had rung, his voice had been heard in the passage just at twilight, when she little expected such a pleasure; and this had happened twice after he had treated her with peculiar reserve; and, though he rarely talked to her in her uncle's presence, he had looked at her relentingly as he sat opposite her work-table during his stay: the few words he had spoken to her were comforting; his

manner on bidding her good-night was genial. Now, he might come this evening, said False Hope: she almost knew it was False Hope which breathed the whisper, and yet she listened.

She tried to read — her thoughts wandered; she tried to sew—every stitch she put in was an ennui, the occupation was insufferably tedious; she opened her desk, and attempted to write a French composition—she wrote nothing but mistakes.

Suddenly the door-bell sharply rang — her heart leaped—she sprang to the drawing-room door, opened it softly, peeped through the aperture: Fanny was admitting a visitor—a gentleman—a tall man—just the height of Robert. For one second she thought it was Robert—for one second she exulted; but the voice asking for Mr Helstone undeceived her: that voice was an Irish voice, consequently not Moore's but the curate's—Malone's. He was ushered into the dining-room, where, doubtless, he speedily helped his Rector to empty the decanters.

It was a fact to be noted that at whatever house in Briarfield, Whinbury, or Nunnely, one curate dropped in to a meal—dinner or tea, as the case might be—another presently followed; often two more. Not that they gave each other the rendezvous, but they were usually all on the run at the same time; and when Donne, for instance, sought Malone at his lodgings and found him out, he inquired whither he had posted, and having learned of the landlady his destination, hastened with all speed after him: the same causes operated in the same way with Sweeting. Thus it chanced on that afternoon that Caroline's ears were three times tortured with the ringing of the bell, and the advent of undesired guests: for Donne followed Malone, and Sweeting followed Donne; and more wine was ordered up from the cellar into the dining-room (for though old Hel-

stone chid the inferior priesthood when he found them "carousing," as he called it, in their own tents, yet at his hierarchical table he ever liked to treat them to a glass of his best), and through the closed doors Caroline heard their boyish laughter, and the vacant cackle of their voices. Her fear was lest they should stay to tea; for she had no pleasure in making tea for that particular trio. What distinctions people draw! These three were men—young men—educated men, like Moore yet, for her, how great the difference! Their society was a bore—his a delight.

Not only was she destined to be favoured with their clerical company, but Fortune was at this moment bringing her four other guests—lady-guests, all packed in a pony-phaeton now rolling somewhat heavily along the road from Whinbury: an elderly lady, and three of her buxom daughters, were coming to see her "in a friendly way," as the custom of that neighbourhood was. Yes, a fourth time the bell clanged: Fanny brought the present announcement to the drawing-room—

"Mrs Sykes and the three Misses Sykes."

When Caroline was going to receive company, her habit was to wring her hands very nervously, to flush a little, and come forward hurriedly yet hesitatingly, wishing herself meantime at Jericho. She was, at such crises, sadly deficient in finished manner, though she had once been at school a year. Accordingly, on this occasion, her small white hands sadly maltreated each other, while she stood up, waiting the entrance of Mrs Sykes.

In stalked that lady, a tall bilious gentlewoman, who made an ample and not altogether insincere profession of piety, and was greatly given to hospitality towards the clergy; in sailed her three daughters, a showy trio, being all three well-grown, and more or less handsome.

In English country ladies there is this point to be remarked. Whether young or old, pretty or plain, dull or sprightly, they all (or almost all) have a certain expression stamped on their features, which seems to say, "I know—I do not boast of it—but I *know* that I am the standard of what is proper; let every one therefore whom I approach, or who approaches me, keep a sharp look-out, for wherein they differ from me—be the same in dress, manner, opinion, principle, or practice—therein they are wrong."

Mrs and Misses Sykes, far from being exceptions to this observation, were pointed illustrations of its truth. Miss Mary—a well-looked, well-meant, and, on the whole, well-dispositioned girl—wore her complacency with some state, though without harshness; Miss Harriet—a beauty—carried it more overbearingly: she looked high and cold; Miss Hannah, who was conceited, dashing, pushing, flourished hers consciously and openly; the mother evinced it with the gravity proper to her age and religious fame.

The reception was got through somehow. Caroline "was glad to see them" (an unmitigated fib), hoped they were well, hoped Mrs Sykes's cough was better (Mrs Sykes had had a cough for the last twenty years), hoped the Misses Sykes had left their sisters at home well; to which inquiry the Misses Sykes, sitting on three chairs opposite the music-stool, whereon Caroline had undesignedly come to anchor, after wavering for some seconds between it and a large arm-chair, into which she at length recollected she ought to induct Mrs Sykes: and indeed that lady saved her the trouble by depositing herself therein: the Misses Sykes replied to Caroline by one simultaneous bow, very majestic and mighty awful. A pause followed: this bow was of a character to ensure silence for the next five minutes, and it did. Mrs Sykes then inquired after Mr Helstone,

and whether he had had any return of rheumatism, and whether preaching twice on a Sunday fatigued him, and if he was capable of taking a full service now; and on being assured he was, she and all her daughters, combining in chorus, expressed their opinion that he was "a wonderful man of his years."

Pause second.

Miss Mary, getting up the steam in her turn, asked whether Caroline had attended the Bible Society meeting which had been held at Nunnely last Thursday night: the negative answer which truth compelled Caroline to utter—for last Thursday evening she had been sitting at home, reading a novel which Robert had lent her—elicited a simultaneous expression of surprise from the lips of the four ladies.

"We were all there," said Miss Mary; "mamma and all of us; we even persuaded papa to go: Hannah would insist upon it: but he fell asleep while Mr Langweilig, the German Moravian minister, was speaking: I felt quite ashamed, he nodded so."

"And there was Dr Broadbent," cried Hannah, "such a beautiful speaker! You couldn't expect it of him, for he is almost a vulgar-looking man."

"But such a dear man," interrupted Mary.

"And such a good man, such a useful man," added her mother.

"Only like a butcher in appearance," interposed the fair proud Harriet. "I couldn't bear to look at him: I listened with my eyes shut."

Miss Helstone felt her ignorance and incompetency; not having seen Dr Broadbent, she could not give her opinion. Pause third came on. During its continuance, Caroline was feeling at her heart's core what a dreaming fool she was; what an unpractical life she led; how little fitness there was in her for ordinary intercourse with the ordinary world. She was feeling how

exclusively she had attached herself to the white cottage in the Hollow; how in the existence of one inmate of that cottage she had pent all her universe: she was sensible that this would not do, and that some day she would be forced to make an alteration: it could not be said that she exactly wished to resemble the ladies before her, but she wished to become superior to her present self, so as to feel less scared by their dignity.

The sole means she found of reviving the flagging discourse, was by asking them if they would all stay to tea; and a cruel struggle it cost her to perform this piece of civility. Mrs Sykes had begun—"We are much obliged to you, but"——when in came Fanny once more.

"The gentlemen will stay the evening, ma'am," was the message she brought from Mr Helstone.

"What gentlemen have you?" now inquired Mrs Sykes. Their names were specified; she and her daughters interchanged glances: the curates were not to them what they were to Caroline. Mr Sweeting was quite a favourite with them; even Mr Malone rather so, because he was a clergyman. "Really, since you have company already, I think we will stay," remarked Mrs Sykes. "We shall be quite a pleasant little party: I always like to meet the clergy."

And now Caroline had to usher them upstairs, to help them to unshawl, smooth their hair, and make themselves smart; to re-conduct them to the drawing-room, to distribute amongst them books of engravings, or odd things purchased from the Jew-basket: she was obliged to be a purchaser, though she was but a slack contributor: and if she had possessed plenty of money, she would rather, when it was brought to the Rectory —an awful incubus!—have purchased the whole stock, than contributed a single pincushion.

It ought perhaps to be explained in passing, for the benefit of those who are not "au fait" to the mysteries

of the "Jew-basket" and "Missionary-basket," that these "meubles" are willow-repositories, of the capacity of a good-sized family clothes-basket, dedicated to the purpose of conveying from house to house a monster collection of pincushions, needlebooks, card-racks, work-bags, articles of infant wear, &c., &c., &c., made by the willing or reluctant hands of the Christian ladies of a parish, and sold perforce to the heathenish gentlemen thereof, at prices unblushingly exorbitant. The proceeds of such compulsory sales are applied to the conversion of the Jews, the seeking up of the ten missing tribes, or to the regeneration of the interesting coloured population of the globe. Each lady contributor takes it in her turn to keep the basket a month, to sew for it, and to foist off its contents on a shrinking male public. An exciting time it is when that turn comes round: some active-minded women, with a good trading spirit, like it, and enjoy exceedingly the fun of making hard-handed worsted-spinners cash up, to the tune of four or five hundred per cent. above cost price, for articles quite useless to them; other—feebler souls object to it, and would rather see the prince of darkness himself at their door any morning, than that phantom-basket, brought with "Mrs Rouse's compliments, and please, ma'am, she says it's your turn now."

Miss Helstone's duties of hostess performed, more anxiously than cheerily, she betook herself to the kitchen, to hold a brief privy-council with Fanny and Eliza about the tea.

"What a lot on 'em!" cried Eliza, who was cook. "And I put off the baking to-day because I thought there would be bread plenty to fit while morning: we shall never have enow."

"Are there any tea-cakes?" asked the young mistress.

"Only three and a loaf. I wish these fine folk

would stay at home till they're asked: and I want to finish trimming my hat" (bonnet she meant).

"Then," suggested Caroline, to whom the importance of the emergency gave a certain energy, "Fanny must run down to Briarfield and buy some muffins and crumpets, and some biscuits: and don't be cross, Eliza, we can't help it now."

"And which tea-things are we to have?"

"Oh, the best, I suppose: I'll get out the silver service," and she ran upstairs to the plate-closet, and presently brought down tea-pot, cream-ewer, and sugar-basin.

"And mun we have th' urn?"

"Yes; and now get it ready as quickly as you can, for the sooner we have tea over, the sooner they will go—at least, I hope so. Heigho! I wish they were gone," she sighed as she returned to the drawing-room. "Still," she thought as she paused at the door ere opening it, "if Robert would but come even now how bright all would be!—How comparatively easy the task of amusing these people, if he were present! There would be an interest in hearing him talk (though he never says much in company) and in talking in his presence: there can be no interest in hearing any of them, or in speaking to them. How they will gabble when the curates come in, and how weary I shall grow with listening to them! But I suppose I am a selfish fool: these are very respectable gentlefolks; I ought no doubt to be proud of their countenance; I don't say they are not as good as I am—far from it—but they are different from me.

She went in.

Yorkshire people, in those days, took their tea round the table; sitting well into it, with their knees duly introduced under the mahogany. It was essential to have a multitude of plates of bread and butter, varied in sorts

and plentiful in quantity: it was thought proper, too, that on the centre-plate should stand a glass dish of marmalade; among the viands was expected to be found a small assortment of cheesecakes and tarts: if there was also a plate of thin slices of pink ham garnished with green parsley, so much the better.

Eliza, the Rector's cook, fortunately knew her business as provider: she had been put out of humour a little at first, when the invaders came so unexpectedly in such strength; but it appeared that she regained her cheerfulness with action, for in due time the tea was spread forth in handsome style; and neither ham, tarts, nor marmalade were wanting among its accompaniments.

The curates, summoned to this bounteous repast, entered joyous; but at once, on seeing the ladies, of whose presence they had not been forewarned, they came to a stand in the doorway. Malone headed the party; he stopped short and fell back, almost capsizing Donne, who was behind him. Donne, staggering three paces in retreat, sent little Sweeting into the arms of old Helstone, who brought up the rear. There was some expostulation, some tittering: Malone was desired to mind what he was about, and urged to push forward; which at last he did, though colouring to the top of his peaked forehead a bluish purple. Helstone, advancing, set the shy curates aside, welcomed all his fair guests, shook hands and passed a jest with each, and seated himself snugly between the lovely Harriet and the dashing Hannah; Miss Mary he requested to move to the seat opposite to him, that he might see her if he couldn't be near her. Perfectly easy and gallant, in his way, were his manners always to young ladies; and most popular was he amongst them: yet, at heart, he neither respected nor liked the sex, and such of them as circumstances had brought into intimate relation with him had ever feared rather than loved him.

The curates were left to shift for themselves. Sweeting, who was the least embarrassed of the three, took refuge beside Mrs Sykes; who, he knew, was almost as fond of him as if he had been her son. Donne, after making his general bow with a grace all his own, and saying in a high pragmatical voice, "How d'ye do, Miss Helstone?" dropped into a seat at Caroline's elbow: to her unmitigated annoyance, for she had a peculiar antipathy to Donne, on account of his stultified and unmovable self-conceit, and his incurable narrowness of mind. Malone, grinning most unmeaningly, inducted himself into the corresponding seat on the other side: she was thus blessed in a pair of supporters; neither of whom, she knew, would be of any mortal use, whether for keeping up the conversation, handing cups, circulating the muffins, or even lifting the plate from the slop-basin. Little Sweeting, small and boyish as he was, would have been worth twenty of them.

Malone, though a ceaseless talker when there were only men present, was usually tongue-tied in the presence of ladies: three phrases, however, he had ready cut and dried, which he never failed to produce—

1stly. "Have you had a walk to-day, Miss Helstone?"

2ndly. "Have you seen your cousin, Moore, lately?"

3rdly. "Does your class at the Sunday-school keep up its number?"

These three questions being put and responded to, between Caroline and Malone reigned silence.

With Donne it was otherwise: he was troublesome, exasperating. He had a stock of small-talk on hand, at once the most trite and perverse that can well be imagined: abuse of the people of Briarfield; of the natives of Yorkshire generally; complaints of the want of high society; of the backward state of civilisation in

these districts; murmurings against the disrespectful conduct of the lower orders in the north toward their betters; silly ridicule of the manner of living in these parts,—the want of style, the absence of elegance, as if he, Donne, had been accustomed to very great doings indeed: an insinuation which his somewhat underbred manner and aspect failed to bear out. These strictures he seemed to think must raise him in the estimation of Miss Helstone, or of any other lady who heard him; whereas with her, at least, they brought him to a level below contempt: though sometimes, indeed, they incensed her; for, a Yorkshire girl herself, she hated to hear Yorkshire abused by such a pitiful prater; and when brought up to a certain pitch, she would turn and say something of which neither the matter nor the manner recommended her to Mr Donne's good-will. She would tell him it was no proof of refinement to be ever scolding others for vulgarity; and no sign of a good pastor to be eternally censuring his flock. She would ask him what he had entered the Church for, since he complained there were only cottages to visit, and poor people to preach to? — whether he had been ordained to the ministry merely to wear soft clothing and sit in kings' houses? These questions were considered by all the curates as, to the last degree, audacious and impious.

Tea was a long time in progress: all the guests gabbled as their hostess had expected they would. Mr Helstone, being in excellent spirits,—when, indeed, was he ever otherwise in society, attractive female society? —it being only with the one lady of his own family that he maintained a grim taciturnity,—kept up a brilliant flow of easy prattle with his right-hand and left-hand neighbours, and even with his *vis-à-vis*, Miss Mary: though as Mary was the most sensible, the least coquettish of the three, to her the elderly

widower was the least attentive. At heart, he could not abide sense in women: he liked to see them as silly, as light-headed, as vain, as open to ridicule as possible; because they were then in reality what he held them to be, and wished them to be,—inferior: toys to play with, to amuse a vacant hour and to be thrown away.

Hannah was his favourite. Harriet, though beautiful, egotistical, and self-satisfied, was not quite weak enough for him: she had some genuine self-respect amidst much false pride, and if she did not talk like an oracle, neither would she babble like one crazy: she would not permit herself to be treated quite as a doll, a child, a plaything: she expected to be bent to like a queen.

Hannah, on the contrary, demanded no respect; only flattery: if her admirers only *told* her that she was an angel, she would let them *treat* her like an idiot. So very credulous and frivolous was she; so very silly did she become when besieged with attention, flattered and admired to the proper degree, that there were moments when Helstone actually felt tempted to commit matrimony a second time, and to try the experiment of taking her for his second helpmeet: but, fortunately, the salutary recollection of the ennuis of his first marriage, the impression still left on him of the weight of the millstone he had once worn round his neck, the fixity of his feelings respecting the insufferable evils of conjugal existence, operated as a check to his tenderness, suppressed the sigh heaving his old iron lungs, and restrained him from whispering to Hannah proposals it would have been high fun and great satisfaction to her to hear.

It is probable she would have married him if he had asked her; her parents would have quite approved the match: to them his fifty-five years, his bend-leather heart, could have presented no obstacles; and, as he was a rector, held an excellent living, occupied a good house,

and was supposed even to have private property (though in that the world was mistaken: every penny of the £5000 inherited by him from his father had been devoted to the building and endowing of a new church at his native village in Lancashire—for he could show a lordly munificence when he pleased, and if the end was to his liking, never hesitated about making a grand sacrifice to attain it),—her parents, I say, would have delivered Hannah over to his lovingkindness and his tender mercies without one scruple; and the second Mrs Helstone, inversing the natural order of insect existence, would have fluttered through the honeymoon a bright, admired butterfly, and crawled the rest of her days a sordid trampled worm.

Little Mr Sweeting, sitting between Mrs Sykes and Miss Mary, both of whom were very kind to him, and having a dish of tarts before him, and marmalade and crumpet upon his plate, looked and felt more content than any monarch. He was fond of all the Misses Sykes: they were all fond of him: he thought them magnificent girls, quite proper to mate with one of his inches. If he had a cause of regret at this blissful moment, it was that Miss Dora happened to be absent; Dora being the one whom he secretly hoped one day to call Mrs David Sweeting, with whom he dreamt of taking stately walks, leading her like an empress through the village of Nunnely: and an empress she would have been, if size could make an empress. She was vast, ponderous: seen from behind, she had the air of a very stout lady of forty; but withal she possessed a good face, and no unkindly character.

The meal at last drew to a close: it would have been over long ago, if Mr Donne had not persisted in sitting with his cup half full of cold tea before him, long after the rest had finished and after he himself had discussed such allowance of viands as he felt competent to swallow—

long, indeed, after signs of impatience had been manifested all round the board: till chairs were pushed back; till the talk flagged; till silence fell. Vainly did Caroline inquire repeatedly if he would have another cup; if he would take a little hot tea, as that must be cold, &c.: he would neither drink it nor leave it. He seemed to think that this isolated position of his gave him somehow a certain importance: that it was dignified and stately to be the last; that it was grand to keep all the others waiting. So long did he linger, that the very urn died: it ceased to hiss. At length, however, the old Rector himself, who had hitherto been too pleasantly engaged with Hannah to care for the delay, got impatient.

"For whom are we waiting?" he asked.

"For me, I believe," returned Donne complacently; appearing to think it much to his credit that a party should thus be kept dependent on his movements.

"Tut!" cried Helstone: then standing up, "Let us return thanks," said he: which he did forthwith, and all quitted the table. Donne, nothing abashed, still sat ten minutes quite alone, whereupon Mr Helstone rang the bell for the things to be removed; the curate at length saw himself forced to empty his cup, and to relinquish the *rôle* which, he thought, had given him such a felicitous distinction, drawn upon him such flattering general notice.

And now, in the natural course of events (Caroline, knowing how it would be, had opened the piano, and produced music-books in readiness) music was asked for. This was Mr Sweeting's chance for showing off: he was eager to commence; he undertook, therefore, the arduous task of persuading the young ladies to favour the company with an air—a song. *Con amore*, he went through the whole business of begging, praying, resisting excuses, explaining away difficulties, and at last suc-

ceeded in persuading Miss Harriet to allow herself to be led to the instrument. Then out came the pieces of his flute (he always carried them in his pocket, as unfailingly as he carried his handkerchief). They were screwed and arranged; Malone and Donne meantime herding together, and sneering at him, which the little man, glancing over his shoulder, saw, but did not heed at all: he was persuaded their sarcasm all arose from envy; they could not accompany the ladies as he could; he was about to enjoy a triumph over them.

The triumph began. Malone, much chagrined at hearing him pipe up in most superior style, determined to earn distinction, too, if possible, and all at once assuming the character of a swain (which character he had endeavoured to enact once or twice before, but in which he had not hitherto met with the success he doubtless opined his merits deserved), approached a sofa on which Miss Helstone was seated, and depositing his great Irish frame near her, tried his hand (or rather tongue) at a fine speech or two, accompanied by grins the most extraordinary and incomprehensible. In the course of his efforts to render himself agreeable, he contrived to possess himself of the two long sofa cushions and a square one; with which, after rolling them about for some time with strange gestures, he managed to erect a sort of barrier between himself and the object of his attentions. Caroline, quite willing that they should be sundered, soon devised an excuse for stepping over to the opposite side of the room, and taking up a position beside Mrs Sykes; of which good lady she entreated some instruction in a new stitch in ornamental knitting, a favour readily granted; and thus Peter Augustus was thrown out.

Very sullenly did his countenance lower when he saw himself abandoned,—left entirely to his own resources, on a large sofa, with the charge of three small

cushions on his hands. The fact was, he felt disposed seriously to cultivate acquaintance with Miss Helstone; because he thought, in common with others, that her uncle possessed money, and concluded, that since he had no children, he would probably leave it to his niece. Gérard Moore was better instructed on this point; he had seen the neat church that owed its origin to the Rector's zeal and cash, and more than once, in his inmost soul, had cursed an expensive caprice which crossed his wishes.

The evening seemed long to one person in that room. Caroline at intervals dropped her knitting on her lap, and gave herself up to a sort of brain-lethargy —closing her eyes and depressing her head—caused by what seemed to her the unmeaning hum around her: the inharmonious, tasteless rattle of the piano keys, the squeaking and gasping notes of the flute, the laughter and mirth of her uncle, and Hannah, and Mary, she could not tell whence originating, for she heard nothing comic or gleeful in their discourse; and more than all, by the interminable gossip of Mrs Sykes murmured close at her ear; gossip which rang the changes on four subjects: her own health and that of the various members of her family; the Missionary and Jew baskets and their contents; the late meeting at Nunnely, and one which was expected to come off next week at Whinbury.

Tired at length to exhaustion, she embraced the opportunity of Mr Sweeting coming up to speak to Mrs Sykes, to slip quietly out of the apartment, and seek a moment's respite in solitude. She repaired to the dining-room, where the clear but now low remnant of a fire still burnt in the grate. The place was empty and quiet, glasses and decanters were cleared from the table, the chairs were put back in their places, all was orderly. Caroline sank into her uncle's large easy-

chair, half shut her eyes, and rested herself—rested at least her limbs, her senses, her hearing, her vision—weary with listening to nothing, and gazing on vacancy. As to her mind, that flew directly to the Hollow: it stood on the threshold of the parlour there, then it passed to the counting-house, and wondered which spot was blessed by the presence of Robert. It so happened that neither locality had that honour; for Robert was half a mile away from both, and much nearer to Caroline than her deadened spirit suspected: he was at this moment crossing the churchyard, approaching the Rectory garden-gate: not, however, coming to see his cousin, but intent solely on communicating a brief piece of intelligence to the Rector.

Yes, Caroline; you hear the wire of the bell vibrate: it rings again for the fifth time this afternoon: you start, and you are certain now that this must be him of whom you dream. Why you are so certain you cannot explain to yourself, but you know it. You lean forward, listening eagerly as Fanny opens the door: right! that is *the* voice—low—with the slight foreign accent, but so sweet, as you fancy: you half rise: "Fanny will tell him Mr Helstone is with company and then he will go away." Oh! she cannot let him go: in spite of herself—in spite of her reason she walks half across the room; she stands ready to dart out in case the step should retreat: but he enters the passage. "Since your master is engaged," he says, "just show me into the dining-room; bring me pen and ink: I will write a short note and leave it for him."

Now, having caught these words, and hearing him advance, Caroline, if there was a door within the dining-room, would glide through it and disappear. She feels caught, hemmed in; she dreads her unexpected presence may annoy him. A second since, she would have flown to him; that second past, she would

flee from him. She cannot; there is no way of escape: the dining-room has but one door, through which now enters her cousin. The look of troubled surprise she expected to see in his face has appeared there, has shocked her, and is gone. She has stammered a sort of apology—

"I only left the drawing-room a minute for a little quiet."

There was something so diffident and downcast in the air and tone with which she said this, any one might perceive that some saddening change had lately passed over her prospects, and that the faculty of cheerful self-possession had left her. Mr Moore, probably, remembered how she had formerly been accustomed to meet him with gentle ardour and hopeful confidence; he must have seen how the check of this morning had operated: here was an opportunity for carrying out his new system with effect, if he chose to improve it. Perhaps he found it easier to practise that system in broad daylight, in his mill-yard, amidst busy occupations, than in a quiet parlour, disengaged, at the hour of eventide. Fanny lit the candles, which before had stood unlit on the table, brought writing materials, and left the room: Caroline was about to follow her. Moore, to act consistently, should have let her go; whereas he stood in the doorway, and, holding out his hand, gently kept her back: he did not ask her to stay, but he would not let her go.

"Shall I tell my uncle you are here?" asked she, still in the same subdued voice.

"No: I can say to you all I had to say to him. You will be my messenger?"

"Yes, Robert."

"Then you may just inform him that I have got a clue to the identity of one, at least, of the men who broke my frames; that he belongs to the same gang

who attacked Sykes and Pearson's dressing-shop; and that I hope to have him in custody to-morrow. You can remember that?"

"Oh! yes." These two monosyllables were uttered in a sadder tone than ever; and, as she said them, she shook her head slightly, and sighed. "Will you prosecute him?"

"Doubtless."

"No, Robert."

"And why no, Caroline?"

"Because it will set all the neighbourhood against you more than ever."

"That is no reason why I should not do my duty, and defend my property. This fellow is a great scoundrel, and ought to be incapacitated from perpetrating further mischief."

"But his accomplices will take revenge on you. You do not know how the people of this country bear malice: it is the boast of some of them that they can keep a stone in their pocket seven years, turn it at the end of that time, keep it seven years longer, and hurl it and hit their mark 'at last.'"

Moore laughed.

"A most pithy vaunt," said he; "one that redounds vastly to the credit of your dear Yorkshire friends. But don't fear for me, Lina: I am on my guard against these lamb-like compatriots of yours: don't make yourself uneasy about me."

"How can I help it? You are my cousin. If anything happened"——she stopped.

"Nothing will happen, Lina. To speak in your own language, there is a Providence above all—is there not?"

"Yes, dear Robert. May He guard you!"

"And if prayers have efficacy, yours will benefit me: you pray for me sometimes?"

"Not *sometimes*, Robert: you, and Louis, and Hortense are *always* remembered."

"So I have often imagined: it has occurred to me, when, weary and vexed, I have myself gone to bed like a heathen, that another had asked forgiveness for my day and safety for my night. I don't suppose such vicarial piety will avail much; but the petitions come out of a sincere breast, from innocent lips: they should be acceptable as Abel's offering; and doubtless would be if the object deserved them."

"Annihilate that doubt: it is groundless."

"When a man has been brought up only to make money, and lives to make it, and for nothing else, and scarcely breathes any other air than that of mills and markets, it seems odd to utter his name in a prayer, or to mix his idea with anything divine; and very strange it seems, that a good, pure heart should take him in and harbour him, as if he had any claim to that sort of nest. If I could guide that benignant heart, I believe I should counsel it to exclude one who does not profess to have any higher aim in life than that of patching up his broken fortune, and wiping clean from his bourgeois scutcheon the foul stain of bankruptcy."

The hint, though conveyed thus tenderly and modestly (as Caroline thought), was felt keenly and comprehended clearly.

"Indeed, I only think—or I *will only* think—of you as my cousin," was the quick answer. "I am beginning to understand things better than I did, Robert, when you first came to England: better than I did, a week—a day ago. I know it is your duty to try to get on, and that it won't do for you to be romantic; but in future you must not misunderstand me if I seem friendly. You misunderstood me this morning, did you not?"

"What made you think so?"

"Your look—your manner."

"But look at me now"——

"Oh! you are different now: at present I dare speak to you."

"Yet I am the same, except that I have left the tradesman behind me in the Hollow: your kinsman alone stands before you."

"My cousin, Robert; not Mr Moore."

"Not a bit of Mr Moore. Caroline"——

Here the company was heard rising in the other room; the door was opened; the pony-carriage was ordered; shawls and bonnets were demanded; Mr Helstone called for his niece.

"I must go, Robert."

"Yes, you must go, or they will come in, and find us here; and I, rather than meet all that host in the passage, will take my departure through the window: luckily, it opens like a door. One minute only—put down the candle an instant—good-night. I kiss you because we are cousins; and, being cousins—one—two—three kisses are allowable. Caroline, good-night!"

Chapter viij.

NOAH AND MOSES.

THE next day, Moore had risen before the sun, and had taken a ride to Whinbury and back ere his sister had made the café au lait, or cut the tartines for his breakfast. What business he transacted there, he kept to himself. Hortense asked no questions: it was not her wont to comment on his movements, nor his to render an account of them. The secrets of business—complicated and often dismal mysteries—were buried in his breast, and never came out of their sepulchre, save

now and then to scare Joe Scott, or give a start to some foreign correspondent: indeed, a general habit of reserve on whatever was important seemed bred in his mercantile blood.

Breakfast over, he went to his counting-house. Henry, Joe Scott's boy, brought in the letters and the daily papers; Moore seated himself at his desk, broke the seals of the documents, and glanced them over. They were all short, but not—it seemed—sweet; probably rather sour on the contrary, for as Moore laid down the last, his nostrils emitted a derisive and defiant snuff; and, though he burst into no soliloquy, there was a glance in his eye which seemed to invoke the devil, and lay charges on him to sweep the whole concern to Gehenna. However, having chosen a pen and stripped away the feathered top in a brief spasm of finger-fury—only finger-fury, his face was placid—he dashed off a batch of answers, sealed them, and then went out and walked through the mill: on coming back, he sat down to read his newspaper.

The contents seemed not absorbingly interesting: he more than once laid it across his knee, folded his arms, and gazed into the fire; he occasionally turned his head towards the window: he looked at intervals at his watch: in short, his mind appeared preoccupied. Perhaps he was thinking of the beauty of the weather—for it was a fine and mild morning for the season—and wishing to be out in the fields enjoying it. The door of his counting-house stood wide open, the breeze and sunshine entered freely; but the first visitant brought no spring perfume on its wings, only an occasional sulphur-puff from the soot-thick column of smoke rushing sable from the gaunt mill-chimney.

A dark blue apparition (that of Joe Scott, fresh from a dyeing vat) appeared momentarily at the open door, uttered the words "He's comed, sir," and vanished.

Mr Moore raised not his eyes from the paper. A large man, broad-shouldered and massive-limbed, clad in fustian garments and grey-worsted stockings, entered, who was received with a nod, and desired to take a seat, which he did, making the remark—as he removed his hat (a very bad one), stowed it away under his chair, and wiped his forehead with a spotted cotton handkerchief extracted from the hat-crown—that it was "raight dahn warm for Febewerry." Mr Moore assented: at least he uttered some slight sound, which, though inarticulate, might pass for an assent. The visitor now carefully deposited in the corner beside him an official-looking staff which he bore in his hand; this done, he whistled, probably by way of appearing at his ease.

"You have what is necessary, I suppose?" said Mr Moore.

"Ay! ay! all's right."

He renewed his whistling, Mr Moore his reading: the paper apparently had become more interesting. Presently, however, he turned to his cupboard, which was within reach of his long arm, opened it without rising, took out a black bottle—the same he had produced for Malone's benefit—a tumbler, and a jug, placed them on the table, and said to his guest—

"Help yourself; there's water in that jar in the corner."

"I dunnut knaw that there's mich need, for all a body is dry (thirsty) in a morning," said the fustian gentleman, rising and doing as requested.

"Will you tak' naught yourseln, Mr Moore?" he inquired, as with skilled hand he mixed a portion, and having tested it by a deep draught, sank back satisfied and bland in his seat. Moore—chary of words—replied by a negative movement and murmur.

"Yah'd as good," continued his visitor; "it 'uld

set ye up, wald a sup o' this stuff. Uncommon good Hollands! ye get it fro' furrin' parts, I'se think?"

"Ay!"

"Tak' my advice, and try a glass on't; them lads 'at's coming 'll keep ye talking, nob'dy knows how long: ye'll need propping."

"Have you seen Mr Sykes this morning?" inquired Moore.

"I seed him a hauf an hour—nay—happen a quarter of an hour sin', just afore I set off: he said he aimed to come here, and I sudn't wonder but ye'll have old Helstone too; I see'd 'em saddling his little nag as I passed at back o' t' Rectory."

The speaker was a true prophet, for the trot of a little nag's hoofs were, five minutes after, heard in the yard; it stopped, and a well-known nasal voice cried aloud—"Boy" (probably addressing Harry Scott, who usually hung about the premises from nine A.M. to five P.M.), "take my horse and lead him into the stable."

Helstone came in marching nimbly and erect, looking browner, keener, and livelier than usual.

"Beautiful morning, Moore: how do, my boy? Ha! Whom have we here?" (turning to the personage with the staff). "Sugden! What! you're going to work directly? On my word, you lose no time: but I come to ask explanations: your message was delivered to me; are you sure you are on the right scent? How do you mean to set about the business? Have you got a warrant?"

"Sugden has."

"Then you are going to seek him now? I'll accompany you."

"You will be spared that trouble, sir; he is coming to seek me. I'm just now sitting in state, waiting his arrival."

"And who is it? One of my parishioners?"

Joe Scott had entered unobserved; he now stood, a most sinister phantom, half his person being dyed of the deepest tint of indigo, leaning on the desk. His master's answer to the Rector's question was a smile; Joe took the word; putting on a quiet but pawky look, he said—

"It's a friend of yours, Mr Helstone; a gentleman you often speak of."

"Indeed! His name, Joe?—You look well this morning."

"Only the Rev. Moses Barraclough: t' tub orator you call him sometimes, I think."

"Ah!" said the Rector, taking out his snuff-box, and administering to himself a very long pinch—"Ah! couldn't have supposed it. Why, the pious man never was a workman of yours, Moore? He's a tailor by trade."

"And so much the worse grudge I owe him, for interfering, and setting my discarded men against me."

"And Moses was actually present at the battle of Stilbro' Moor? He went there—wooden leg and all?"

"Ay, sir," said Joe; "he went there on horseback, that his leg mightn't be noticed: he was the captain and wore a mask; the rest only had their faces blacked."

"And how was he found out?"

"I'll tell you, sir," said Joe: "t' maister's not so fond of talking; I've no objections. He courted Sarah, Mr Moore's sarvant lass, and so it seems she would have nothing to say to him; she either didn't like his wooden leg, or she'd some notion about his being a hypocrite. Happen (for women is queer hands —we may say that amang werseln when there's none of 'em nigh) she'd have encouraged him, in spite of his leg and his deceit—just to pass time like; I've known some on 'em do as mich, and some o' t' bonniest and

mimmest-looking too—ay! I've seen clean, trim young things, that looked as denty and pure as daisies, and wi' time a body fun' 'em out to be nowt but stinging, venomed nettles."

"Joe's a sensible fellow," interjected Helstone.

"Howsiver, Sarah had another string to her bow: Fred Murgatroyd, one of our lads, is for her, and as women judge men by their faces—and Fred has a middling face, while Moses is none so handsome, as we all knaw—the lass took on wi' Fred. A two-three months sin', Murgatroyd and Moses chanced to meet one Sunday night; they'd both come lurking about these premises wi' the notion of counselling Sarah to tak' a bit of a walk wi' them; they fell out, had a tussle, and Fred was worsted; for he's young and small, and Barraclough, for all he has only one leg, is almost as strong as Sugden there; indeed, anybody that hears him roaring at a revival or a love-feast, may be sure he's no weakling."

"Joe, you're insupportable," here broke in Mr Moore. "You spin out your explanation as Moses spins out his sermons. The long and short of it is, Murgatroyd was jealous of Barraclough; and last night, as he and a friend took shelter in a barn from a shower, they heard and saw Moses conferring with some associates within. From their discourse, it was plain he had been the leader, not only at Stilbro' Moor, but in the attack on Sykes's property: moreover they planned a deputation to wait on me this morning, which the tailor is to head, and which, in the most religious and peaceful spirit, is to entreat me to put the accursed thing out of my tent. I rode over to Whinbury this morning, got a constable and a warrant, and I am now waiting to give my friend the reception he deserves; here, meantime, comes Sykes: Mr Helstone, you must spirit him up; he feels timid at the thoughts of prosecuting."

A gig was heard to roll into the yard: Mr Sykes entered; a tall stout man of about fifty, comely of feature, but feeble of physiognomy: he looked anxious.

"Have they been? Are they gone? Have you got him? Is it over?" he asked.

"Not yet," returned Moore with phlegm. "We are waiting for them."

"They'll not come; it's near noon: better give it up; it will excite bad feeling—make a stir—cause perhaps fatal consequences.'

"*You* need not appear," said Moore. "I shall meet them in the yard when they come; *you* can stay here."

"But my name must be seen in the law proceedings: a wife and family, Mr Moore—a wife and family make a man cautious."

Moore looked disgusted. "Give way, if you please," said he; "leave me to myself; I have no objection to act alone: only be assured you will not find safety in submission: your partner, Pearson, gave way, and conceded, and forebore—well, that did not prevent them from attempting to shoot him in his own house."

"My dear sir, take a little wine and water," recommended Mr Helstone. The wine and water was Hollands and water, as Mr Sykes discovered when he had compounded and swallowed a brimming tumbler thereof: it transfigured him in two minutes, brought the colour back to his face, and made him at least *word*-valiant. He now announced that he hoped he was above being trampled on by the common people; he was determined to endure the insolence of the working-classes no longer; he had considered of it and made up his mind to go all lengths; if money and spirit could put down these rioters, they should be put down; Mr Moore might do as he liked, but *he*—Christie Sykes—would spend his last penny in law before he would be beaten: he'd settle them, or he'd see.

"Take another glass," urged Moore.

Mr Sykes didn't mind if he did; this was a cold morning (Sugden had found it a warm one); it was necessary to be careful at this season of the year—it was proper to take something to keep the damp out; he had a little cough already (here he coughed in attestation of the fact); something of this sort (lifting the black bottle) was excellent, taken medicinally (he poured the physic into his tumbler); he didn't make a practice of drinking spirits in a morning, but occasionally it really was prudent to take precautions.

"Quite prudent, and take them by all means," urged the host.

Mr Sykes now addressed Mr Helstone, who stood on the hearth, his shovel-hat on his head, watching him significantly with his little, keen eyes.

"You, sir, as a clergyman," said he, "may feel it disagreeable to be present amidst scenes of hurry and flurry, and, I may say, peril: I dare say your nerves won't stand it; you're a man of peace, sir, but we manufacturers, living in the world, and always in turmoil, get quite belligerent. Really, there's an ardour excited by the thoughts of danger that makes my heart pant. When Mrs Sykes is afraid of the house being attacked and broke open—as she is every night—I get quite excited. I couldn't describe to you, sir, my feelings: really, if anybody was to come—thieves or anything—I believe I should enjoy it, such is my spirit."

The hardest of laughs, though brief and low, and by no means insulting, was the response of the Rector. Moore would have pressed upon the heroic mill-owner a third tumbler, but the clergyman, who never transgressed, nor would suffer others in his presence to transgress the bounds of decorum, checked him.

"Enough is as good as a feast, is it not, Mr Sykes?" he said, and Mr Sykes assented; and then sat and

watched Joe Scott remove the bottle at a sign from Helstone, with a self-satisfied simper on his lips, and a regretful glisten in his eye. Moore looked as if he should have liked to fool him to the top of his bent. What would a certain young kinswoman of his have said could she have seen her dear, good, great Robert—her Coriolanus—just now? Would she have acknowledged in that mischievous, sardonic visage the same face to which she had looked up with such love, which had bent over her with such gentleness last night? Was that the man who had spent so quiet an evening with his sister and his cousin—so suave to one, so tender to the other—reading Shakspeare and listening to Chénier?

Yes, it was the same man, only seen on a different side; a side Caroline had not yet fairly beheld, though perhaps she had enough sagacity faintly to suspect its existence. Well, Caroline had, doubtless, her defective side too: she was human, she must, then, have been very imperfect, and had she seen Moore on his very worst side, she would probably have said this to herself and excused him. Love can excuse anything except Meanness; but Meanness kills Love, cripples even Natural Affection; without Esteem, True Love cannot exist. Moore with all his faults might be esteemed; for he had no moral scrofula in his mind, no hopeless polluting taint, such, for instance, as that of falsehood; neither was he the slave of his appetites; the active life to which he had been born and bred had given him something else to do than to join the futile chase of the pleasure-hunter: he was a man undegraded, the disciple of Reason, *not* the votary of Sense. The same might be said of old Helstone: neither of these two would look, think, or speak a lie; for neither of them had the wretched black bottle, which had just been put away, any charms; both might boast a valid claim to the proud title of "lord of the creation," for no animal

vice was lord of them: they looked and were superior beings to poor Sykes.

A sort of gathering and trampling sound was heard in the yard, and then a pause. Moore walked to the window, Helstone followed; both stood on one side, the tall junior behind the under-sized senior, looking forth carefully, so that they might not be visible from without; their sole comment on what they saw was a cynical smile flashed into each other's stern eyes.

A flourishing oratorical cough was now heard, followed by the interjection, "Whisht!" designed, as it seemed, to still the hum of several voices. Moore opened his casement an inch or two to admit sound more freely.

"Joseph Scott," began a snuffling voice—Scott was standing sentinel at the counting-house door—"might we inquire if your master be within, and is to be spoken to?"

"He's within, ay!" said Joe nonchalantly.

"Would you, then, if *you* please" (emphasis on "you"), "have the goodness to tell *him* that twelve gentlemen wants to see him."

"He'd happen to ax what for," suggested Joe. "I mught as weel tell him at t' same time."

"For a purpose," was the answer. Joe entered.

"Please, sir, there's twelve gentlemen wants to see ye, 'for a purpose.'"

"Good, Joe; I'm their man. Sugden, come when I whistle."

Moore went out, chuckling drily. He advanced into the yard, one hand in his pocket, the other in his waistcoat, his cap brim over his eyes, shading in some measure their deep dancing ray of scorn. Twelve men waited in the yard, some in their shirt-sleeves, some in blue aprons: two figured conspicuously in the van of the party. One, a little dapper strutting man, with a

turned-up nose: the other, a broad-shouldered fellow, distinguished no less by his demure face and cat-like, trustless eyes, than by a wooden leg and stout crutch: there was a kind of leer about his lips, he seemed laughing in his sleeve at some person or thing, his whole air was anything but that of a true man.

"Good morning, Mr Barraclough," said Moore debonairly, for him.

"Peace be unto you!" was the answer: Mr Barraclough entirely closing his naturally half-shut eyes as he delivered it.

"I'm obliged to you: peace is an excellent thing; there's nothing I more wish for myself; but that is not all you have to say to me, I suppose? I imagine peace is not your purpose?"

"As to our purpose," began Barraclough, "it's one that may sound strange, and perhaps foolish to ears like yours, for the childer of this world is wiser in their generation than the childer of light."

"To the point, if you please, and let me hear what it is."

"Ye'se hear, sir; if I cannot get it off, there's eleven behint can help me. It is a grand purpose, and" (changing his voice from a half-sneer to a whine) "it's the Looard's own purpose, and that's better."

"Do you want a subscription to a new Ranter's chapel, Mr Barraclough? Unless your errand be something of that sort, I cannot see what you have to do with it."

"I hadn't that duty on my mind, sir; but as Providence has led ye to mention the subject, I'll make it i' my way to tak' ony trifle ye may have to spare; the smallest contribution will be acceptable."

With that he doffed his hat, and held it out as a begging-box; a brazen grin at the same time crossing his countenance.

"If I gave you sixpence, you would drink it."

Barraclough uplifted the palms of his hands and the whites of his eyes, evincing in the gesture a mere burlesque of hypocrisy.

"You seem a fine fellow," said Moore, quite coolly and drily; "you don't care for showing me that you are a double-dyed hypocrite, that your trade is fraud: you expect indeed to make me laugh at the cleverness with which you play your coarsely farcical part, while at the same time you think you are deceiving the men behind you."

Moses' countenance lowered; he saw he had gone too far: he was going to answer, when the second leader, impatient of being hitherto kept in the background, stepped forward. This man did not look like a traitor, though he had an exceedingly self-confident and conceited air.

"Mr Moore," commenced he, speaking also in his throat and nose, and enunciating each word very slowly, as if with a view to giving his audience time to appreciate fully the uncommon elegance of the phraseology; "it might, perhaps, justly be said that reason rather than peace is our purpose. We come, in the first place, to request you to hear reason, and should *you* refuse, it is my duty to warn *you*, in very decided terms, that measures will be had resort to" (he meant recourse), "which will probably terminate in—in bringing *you* to a sense of the unwisdom, of the—the foolishness, which seems to guide and guard your perceedings as a tradesman in this manufacturing part of the country. Hem! . . . Sir, I would beg to allude that as a furriner, coming from a distant coast, another quarter and hemisphere of this globe, thrown, as I may say, a perfect outcast on these shores—the cliffs of Albion —you have not that understanding of huz and wer ways which might conduce to the benefit of the work-

ing classes. If, to come at once to partic'lars, consider to give up this here miln, and go w further protractions straight home to where you b it 'ud happen be as well. I can see naught such a plan. What hev ye to say tull't, lads?" ing round to the other members of the deputatior responded unanimously, "Hear, hear!"

"Brayvo, Noah o' Tim's!" murmured Joe who stood behind Mr Moore. "Moses 'll neve that—Cliffs o' Albion, and t' other hemisphere certy! Did ye come fro' th' Antarctic Zone, m Moses is dished."

Moses, however, refused to be dished; he tl he would try again. Casting a somewhat ireful at "Noah o' Tim's," he launched out in his turn now he spoke in a serious tone, relinquishing the s which he found had not answered.

"Or iver you set up the pole o' your tent am Mr Moore, we lived i' peace and quietness; may say, in all loving-kindness. I am not my aged person as yet, but I can remember as far b maybe some twenty year, when hand-labour were e aged and respected, and no mischief-maker had ve to introduce these here machines, which is so pern Now, I am not a cloth-dresser myself, but by a tailor; howsiver, my heart is of a softish I'm a very feeling man, and when I see my br oppressed, like my great namesake of old, I st for 'em; for which intent, I this day speak wi face to face, and advises you to part wi' your i machinery and tak' on more hands."

"What if I don't follow your advice Barraclough?"

"The Looard pardon you! The Looard your heart, sir!"

"Are you in connection with the Wesleyan Mr Barraclough?"

"Praise God! Bless His name! I'm a joined Methody!"

"Which in no respect prevents you from being at the same time a drunkard and a swindler. I saw you one night a week ago laid dead-drunk by the road-side, as I returned from Stilbro' market; and while you preach peace, you make it the business of your life to stir up dissension. You no more sympathise with the poor who are in distress, than you sympathise with me: you incite them to outrage for bad purposes of your own; so does the individual called Noah o' Tim's. You two are restless, meddling, impudent scoundrels, whose chief motive principle is a selfish ambition, as dangerous as it is puerile. The persons behind you are some of them honest though misguided men; but you two I count altogether bad."

Barraclough was going to speak.

"Silence! You have had your say, and now I will have mine. As to being dictated to by you or any Jack, Jem, or Jonathan on earth, I shall not suffer it for a moment. You desire me to quit the country: you request me to part with my machinery; in case I refuse, you threaten me. I *do* refuse—point-blank! Here I stay; and by this mill I stand; and into it will I convey the best machinery inventors can furnish. What will you do? The utmost you *can* do—and this you will never *dare* to do—is to burn down my mill, destroy its contents, and shoot me. What then? Suppose that building was a ruin and I was a corpse, what then?—you lads behind these two scamps, would that stop invention or exhaust science?—Not for the fraction of a second of time! Another and better gig mill would rise on the ruins of this, and perhaps a more enterprising owner come in my place. Hear me!—I'll make my cloth as I please, and according to the best lights I have. In its manufacture I will employ what means I choose.

Whoever, after hearing this, shall dare to interfere with me, may just take the consequences. An example shall prove I'm in earnest."

He whistled shrill and loud. Sugden, his staff and warrant, came on to the scene.

Moore turned sharply to Barraclough: "You were at Stilbro'," said he; "I have proof of that. You were on the moor,—you wore a mask,—you knocked down one of my men with your own hand,—you! a preacher of the Gospel! Sugden, arrest him!"

Moses was captured. There was a cry and a rush to rescue, but the right hand which all this while had lain hidden in Moore's breast, reappearing, held out a pistol.

"Both barrels are loaded," said he. "I'm quite determined!—keep off!"

Stepping backwards, facing the foe as he went, he guarded his prey to the counting-house. He ordered Joe Scott to pass in with Sugden and the prisoner, and to bolt the door inside. For himself, he walked backwards and forwards along the front of the mill, looking meditatively on the ground, his hand hanging carelessly by his side, but still holding the pistol. The eleven remaining deputies watched him some time, talking under their breath to each other: at length one of them approached. This man looked very different from either of the two who had previously spoken: he was hard-favoured, but modest, and manly-looking.

"I've not much faith i' Moses Barraclough," said he, "and I would speak a word to you myseln, Mr Moore. It's out o' no ill-will that I am here, for my part; it's just to mak' an effort to get things straightened, for they're sorely a crooked. Ye see we're ill off—varry ill off: wer families is poor and pined. We're thrown out o' work wi' these frames: we can get nought to

do: we can earn nought. What is to be done. Mun we say, wisht! and lig us down and dee? Nay: I've no grand words at my tongue's end, Mr Moore, but I feel that it would be a low principle for a reasonable man to starve to death like a dumb creatur':—I will n't do't. I'm not for shedding blood: I'd neither kill a man nor hurt a man; and I'm not for pulling down mills and breaking machines: for, as ye say, that way o' going on 'll niver stop invention; but I'll talk—I'll mak' as big a din as ever I can. Invention may be all right, but I know it isn't right for poor folks to starve. Them that governs mun find a way to help us: they mun mak' fresh orderations. Ye'll say that's hard to do:—so mich louder mun we shout out then, for so much slacker will t' Parliament-men be to set on to a tough job."

"Worry the Parliament-men as much as you please," said Moore; "but to worry the mill-owners is absurd; and I, for one, won't stand it."

"Ye're a raight hard 'un!" returned the workman. "Will n't ye gie us a bit o' time?—Will n't ye consent to mak' your changes rather more slowly?"

"Am I the whole body of clothiers in Yorkshire? Answer me that!"

"Ye're yourseln."

"And only myself! and if I stopped by the way an instant, while others are rushing on, I should be trodden down. If I did as you wish me to do, I should be bankrupt in a month: and would my bankruptcy put bread into your hungry children's mouths? William Farren, neither to your dictation, nor to that of any other, will I submit. Talk to me no more about machinery; I will have my own way. I shall get new frames in to-morrow:—If you broke these, I would still get more. *I'll never give in.*"

Here the mill-bell rang twelve o'clock: it was

the dinner-hour. Moore abruptly turned from the deputation and re-entered his counting-house.

His last words had left a bad, harsh impression: he, at least, had "failed in the disposing of a chance he was lord of." By speaking kindly to William Farren—who was a very honest man, without envy or hatred of those more happily circumstanced than himself; thinking it no hardship and no injustice to be forced to live by labour; disposed to be honourably content if he could but get work to do—Moore might have made a friend. It seemed wonderful how he could turn from such a man without a conciliatory or a sympathising expression. The poor fellow's face looked haggard with want: he had the aspect of a man who had not known what it was to live in comfort and plenty for weeks, perhaps months past: and yet there was no ferocity, no malignity in his countenance: it was worn, dejected, austere, but still patient. How could Moore leave him thus, with the words "I'll never give in," and not a whisper of good-will, or hope, or aid?

Farren, as he went home to his cottage—once, in better times, a decent, clean, pleasant place, but now, though still clean, very dreary, because so poor—asked himself this question. He concluded that the foreign mill-owner was a selfish, an unfeeling, and, he thought, too, a foolish man. It appeared to him that emigration, had he only the means to emigrate, would be preferable to service under such a master. He felt much cast down—almost hopeless.

On his entrance, his wife served out, in orderly sort, such dinner as she had to give him and the bairns: it was only porridge, and too little of that. Some of the younger children asked for more when they had done their portion—an application which disturbed William much: while his wife quieted them as well as she could, he left his seat and went to the door. He

whistled a cheery stave, which did not, however, prevent a broad drop or two (much more like the "first of a thunder-shower" than those which oozed from the wound of the gladiator) from gathering on the lids of his grey eyes, and plashing thence to the threshold. He cleared his vision with his sleeve, and the melting mood over, a very stern one followed.

He still stood brooding in silence, when a gentleman in black came up—a clergyman, it might be seen at once; but neither Helstone, nor Malone, nor Donne, nor Sweeting. He might be forty years old: he was plain-looking, dark-complexioned, and already rather grey-haired. He stooped a little in walking. His countenance, as he came on, wore an abstracted and somewhat doleful air; but, in approaching Farren, he looked up, and then a hearty expression illuminated the pre-occupied, serious face.

"Is it you, William? How are you?" he asked.

"Middling, Mr Hall; how are *ye?* Will ye step in and rest ye?"

Mr Hall, whose name the reader has seen mentioned before (and who, indeed, was vicar of Nunnely, of which parish Farren was a native, and from whence he had removed but three years ago to reside in Briarfield, for the convenience of being near Hollow's Mill, where he had obtained work), entered the cottage, and, having greeted the good wife and the children, sat down. He proceeded to talk very cheerfully about the length of time that had elapsed since the family quitted his parish, the changes which had occurred since; he answered questions touching his sister Margaret, who was inquired after with much interest; he asked questions in his turn, and at last, glancing hastily and anxiously round through his spectacles (he wore spectacles, for he was short-sighted) at the bare room, and at the meagre and wa- faces of the circle about him—

for the children had come round his knee, and the father and mother stood before him—he said abruptly—"And how are you all? How do you get on?"

Mr Hall, be it remarked, though an accomplished scholar, not only spoke with a strong northern accent, but, on occasion, used freely north-country expressions.

"We get on poorly," said William: "we're all out of work. I've selled most o' t' household stuff, as you may see; and what we're to do next, God knows."

"Has Mr Moore turned you off?"

"He has turned us off; and I've sich an opinion of him now, that I think, if he'd tak' me on again to-morrow, I wouldn't work for him."

"It is not like you to say so, William."

"I know it isn't; but I'm getting different to mysel': I feel I am changing. I wadn't heed, if t' bairns and t' wife had enough to live on; but they're pinched—they're pined"——

"Well, my lad, and so are you; I see you are. These are grievous times; I see suffering wherever I turn. William, sit down; Grace, sit down; let us talk it over."

And in order the better to talk it over, Mr Hall lifted the least of the children on to his knee, and placed his hand on the head of the next least; but when the small things began to chatter to him he bid them "Whisht!" and, fixing his eyes on the grate, he regarded the handful of embers which burnt there very gravely.

"Sad times!" he said, "and they last long. It is the will of God: His will be done! but He tries us to the utmost."

Again he reflected.

"You've no money, William, and you've nothing you could sell to raise a small sum?"

"No; I've selled t' chest o' drawers, and t' clock,

and t' bit of a mahogany stand, and t' wife's bonny tea-tray and set o' cheeney 'at she brought for a portion when we were wed."

"And if somebody lent you a pound or two, could you make any good use of it? Could you get into a new way of doing something?"

Farren did not answer; but his wife said quickly, "Ay, I'm sure he could, sir; he's a very contriving chap, is our William. If he'd two or three pounds, he could begin selling stuff."

"Could you, William?"

"Please God," returned William deliberately, "I could buy groceries, and bits o' tapes, and thread, and what I thought would sell, and I could begin hawking at first."

"And you know, sir," interposed Grace, "you're sure William would neither drink, nor idle, nor waste, in any way. He's my husband, and I shouldn't praise him; but I *will* say there's not a soberer, honester man i' England nor he is."

"Well, I'll speak to one or two friends, and I think I can promise to let him have £5 in a day or two: as a loan, ye mind, not a gift: he must pay it back."

"I understand, sir: I'm quite agreeable to that."

"Meantime, there's a few shillings for you, Grace, just to keep the pot boiling till custom comes. Now, bairns, stand up in a row and say your catechism, while your mother goes and buys some dinner: for you've not had much to-day, I'll be bound. You begin, Ben. What is your name?"

Mr Hall stayed till Grace came back; then he hastily took his leave, shaking hands with both Farren and his wife: just at the door, he said to them a few brief but very earnest words of religious consolation and exhortation: with a mutual "God bless you, sir!" "God bless you, my friends!" they separated.

Chapter ix.

BRIARMAINS.

MESSRS Helstone and Sykes began to be extremely jocose and congratulatory with Mr Moore when he returned to them after dismissing the deputation; he was so quiet, however, under their compliments upon his firmness, &c., and wore a countenance so like a still, dark day, equally beamless and breezeless, that the Rector, after glancing shrewdly into his eyes, buttoned up his felicitations with his coat, and said to Sykes, whose senses were not acute enough to enable him to discover unassisted where his presence and conversation were a nuisance—"Come, sir; your road and mine lie partly together: had we not better bear each other company? We'll bid Moore good-morning, and leave him to the happy fancies he seems disposed to indulge."

"And where is Sugden?" demanded Moore, looking up.

"Ah, ha!" cried Helstone. "I've not been quite idle while you were busy. I've been helping you a little: I flatter myself, not injudiciously. I thought it better not to lose time; so, while you were parleying with that down-looking gentleman—Farren, I think his name is,—I opened this back window, shouted to Murgatroyd, who was in the stable, to bring Mr Sykes's gig round; then I smuggled Sugden and brother Moses—wooden leg and all—through the aperture, and saw them mount the gig (always with our good friend Sykes's permission, of course). Sugden took the reins—he drives like Jehu, and in another quarter of an hour, Barraclough will be safe in Stilbro' jail."

"Very good: thank you," said Moore, "and good-morning, gentlemen," he added, and so politely con-

ducted them to the door and saw them clear of his premises.

He was a taciturn, serious man the rest of the day: he did not even bandy a repartee with Joe Scott; who, for his part, said to his master only just what was absolutely necessary to the progress of business, but looked at him a good deal out of the corners of his eyes, frequently came to poke the counting-house fire for him, and once, as he was locking up for the day (the mill was then working short time, owing to the slackness of trade), observed that it was a grand evening, and he "could wish Mr Moore to take a bit of a walk up th' Hollow; it would do him good."

At this recommendation, Mr Moore burst into a short laugh, and after demanding of Joe what all this solicitude meant, and whether he took him for a woman or a child, seized the keys from his hand, and shoved him by the shoulders out of his presence. He called him back, however, ere he had reached the yard-gate.

"Joe, do you know those Farrens? They are not well off, I suppose?"

"They cannot be well off, sir, when they've not had work as a three month. Ye'd see yoursel' 'at William's sorely changed,—fair pared: they've selled most o' t' stuff out o' th' house."

"He was not a bad workman?"

"Ye never had a better, sir, sin' ye began trade."

"And decent people—the whole family?"

"Niver dacenter: th' wife's a raight cant body, and as clean ——! ye mught eat your porridge off th' house floor: they're sorely comed down. I wish William could get a job as gardener or summat i' that way; he understands gardening weel. He once lived wi' a Scotchman that tached him the mysteries o' that craft, as they say."

"Now, then, you can go, Joe; you need not stand there staring at me."

"Ye've no orders to give, sir?"

"None, but for you to take yourself off."

Which Joe did accordingly.

Spring evenings are often cold and raw, and though this had been a fine day, warm even in the morning and meridian sunshine, the air chilled at sunset, the ground crisped, and ere dusk a hoar frost was insiduously stealing over growing grass and unfolding bud. It whitened the pavement in front of Briarmains (Mr Yorke's residence), and made silent havoc among the tender plants in his garden, and on the mossy level of his lawn. As to that great tree, strong-trunked and broad-armed, which guarded the gable nearest the road, it seemed to defy a spring-night frost to harm its still bare boughs; and so did the leafless grove of walnut-trees rising tall behind the house.

In the dusk of the moonless if starry night, lights from windows shone vividly: this was no dark or lonely scene, nor even a silent one. Briarmains stood near the highway, it was rather an old place, and had been built ere that highway was cut, and when a lane winding up through fields was the only path conducting to it. Briarfield lay scarce a mile off; its hum was heard, its glare distinctly seen. Briar Chapel, a large, new, raw, Wesleyan place of worship, rose but a hundred yards distant; and, as there was even now a prayer-meeting being held within its walls, the illumination of its windows cast a bright reflection on the road, while a hymn of a most extraordinary description, such as a very Quaker might feel himself moved by the spirit to dance to, roused cheerily all the echoes of the vicinage. The words were distinctly audible by snatches: here is a quotation or two from different strains; for the singers

passed jauntily from hymn to hymn and from tune to tune, with an ease and buoyancy all their own.

"Oh! who can explain
This struggle for life,
This travail and pain,
This trembling and strife?
Plague, earthquake, and famine,
And tumult and war,
The wonderful coming
Of Jesus declare!

For every fight
Is dreadful and loud,—
The warrior's delight
Is slaughter and blood;
His foes overturning,
Till all shall expire,—
And this is with burning,
And fuel, and fire!"

Here followed an interval of clamorous prayer, accompanied by fearful groans. A shout of "I've found liberty!" "Doad o' Bill's has fun' liberty!" rung from the chapel, and out all the assembly broke again.

"What a mercy is this!
What a heaven of bliss!
How unspeakably happy am I!
Gather'd into the fold,
With thy people enroll'd,
With thy people to live and to die!

Oh, the goodness of God
In employing a clod
His tribute of glory to raise;
His standard to bear,
And with triumph declare
His unspeakable riches of grace!

Oh, the fathomless love,
That has deign'd to approve

And prosper the work of my hands,
With my pastoral crook,
I went over the brook,
And behold I am spread into bands!

Who, I ask in amaze,
Hath begotten me these?
And inquire from what quarter they came;
My full heart it replies,
They are born from the skies,
And gives glory to God and the Lamb!"

The stanza which followed this, after another and longer interregnum of shouts, yells, ejaculations, frantic cries, agonised groans, seemed to cap the climax of noise and zeal.

"Sleeping on the brink of sin,
Tophet gaped to take us in;
Mercy to our rescue flew,—
Broke the snare, and brought us through.

Here, as in a lion's den,
Undevour'd we still remain;
Pass secure the watery flood,
Hanging on the arm of God.

"Here"—

(Terrible, most distracting to the ear was the strained shout in which the last stanza was given.)

"Here we raise our voices higher,
Shout in the refiner's fire;
Clap our hands amidst the flame,
Glory give to Jesus' name!"

The roof of the chapel did *not* fly off; which speaks volumes in praise of its solid slating.

But if Briar chapel seemed alive, so also did Briarmains: though certainly the mansion appeared to enjoy a quieter phase of existence than the temple; some of its windows too were a-glow: the lower casements opened

upon the lawn, curtains concealed the interior, and partly obscured the ray of the candles which lit it, but they did not entirely muffle the sound of voice and laughter. We are privileged to enter that front-door, and to penetrate to the domestic sanctum.

It is not the presence of company which makes Mr Yorke's habitation lively, for there is none within it save his own family, and they are assembled in that farthest room to the right, the back parlour.

This is the usual sitting room of an evening. Those windows would be seen by daylight to be of brilliantly-stained glass—purple and amber the predominant hues, glittering round a gravely tinted medallion in the centre of each, representing the suave head of William Shakspeare, and the serene one of John Milton. Some Canadian views hang on the walls—green forest and blue water scenery—and in the midst of them blazes a night-eruption of Vesuvius; very ardently it glows, contrasted with the cool foam and azure of cataracts, and the dusky depths of woods.

The fire illuminating this room, reader, is such as, if you be a southern, you do not often see burning on the hearth of a private apartment; it is a clear, hot, coal fire, heaped high in the ample chimney. Mr Yorke *will* have such fires even in warm summer weather: he sits beside it with a book in his hand, a little round stand at his elbow supporting a candle—but he is not reading, he is watching his children. Opposite to him sits his lady—a personage whom I might describe minutely, but I feel no vocation to the task. I see her, though, very plainly before me: a large woman of the gravest aspect, care on her front and on her shoulders—but not overwhelming, inevitable care—rather the sort of voluntary, exemplary cloud and burden people ever carry who deem it their duty to be gloomy. Ah, well-a-day! Mrs Yorke had that notion, and grave as Saturn

she was, morning, noon, and night; and hard things she thought of any unhappy wight—especially of the female sex—who dared in her presence to show the light of a gay heart on a sunny countenance. In her estimation, to be mirthful was to be profane; to be cheerful was to be frivolous: she drew no distinctions. Yet she was a very good wife, a very careful mother, looked after her children unceasingly, was sincerely attached to her husband; only the worst of it was, if she could have had her will, she would not have permitted him to have any friend in the world beside herself: all his relations were insupportable to her, and she kept them at arm's length.

Mr Yorke and she agreed perfectly well; yet he was naturally a social, hospitable man—an advocate for family unity—and in his youth, as has been said, he liked none but lively, cheerful women. Why he chose her—how they contrived to suit each other, is a problem puzzling enough, but which might soon be solved if one had time to go into the analysis of the case. Suffice it here to say, that Yorke had a shadowy as well as a sunny side to his character, and that his shadowy side found sympathy and affinity in the whole of his wife's uniformly overcast nature. For the rest, she was a strong-minded woman; never said a weak or a trite thing; took stern, democratic views of society, and rather cynical ones of human nature; considered herself perfect and safe, and the rest of the world all wrong. Her main fault was a brooding, eternal, immitigable suspicion of all men, things, creeds, and parties: this suspicion was a mist before her eyes, a false guide in her path, wherever she looked, wherever she turned.

It may be supposed that the children of such a pair were not likely to turn out quite ordinary, commonplace beings; and they were not. You see six of them, reader: the youngest is a baby on the mother's knee; it is all her own yet—and that one she has not yet begun to

doubt, suspect, condemn; it derives its sustenance from her, it hangs on her, it clings to her, it loves her above everything else in the world: she is sure of that, because, as it lives by her, it cannot be otherwise, therefore she loves it.

The two next are girls, Rose and Jessy; they are both now at their father's knee; they seldom go near their mother, except when obliged to do so. Rose, the elder, is twelve years old; she is like her father—the most like him of the whole group—but it is a granite head copied in ivory; all is softened in colour and line. Yorke himself has a harsh face; his daughter's is not harsh, neither is it quite pretty; it is simple—childlike in feature; the round cheeks bloom: as to the grey eyes, they are otherwise than childlike—a serious soul lights them—a young soul yet, but it will mature, if the body lives; and neither father nor mother have a spirit to compare with it. Partaking of the essence of each, it will one day be better than either—stronger, much purer, more aspiring. Rose is a still sometimes, a stubborn girl now: her mother wants to make of her such a woman as she is herself—a woman of dark and dreary duties—and Rose has a mind full-set, thick-sown with the germs of ideas her mother never knew. It is agony to her often to have these ideas trampled on and repressed. She has never rebelled yet; but if hard driven, she will rebel one day, and then it will be once for all. Rose loves her father: her father does not rule her with a rod of iron; he is good to her. He sometimes fears she will not live, so bright are the sparks of intelligence which, at moments, flash from her glance, and gleam in her language. This idea makes him often sadly tender to her.

He has no idea that little Jessy will die young, she is so gay and chattering, arch—original even now: passionate when provoked, but most affectionate if caressed;

by turns gentle and rattling; exacting yet generous; fearless—of her mother, for instance, whose irrationally hard and strict rule she has often defied—yet reliant on any who will help her. Jessy, with her little piquant face, engaging prattle, and winning ways, is made to be a pet; and her father's pet she accordingly is. It is odd that the doll should resemble her mother feature by feature, as Rose resembles her father, and yet the physiognomy—how different!

Mr Yorke, if a magic mirror were now held before you, and if therein were shown you your two daughters as they will be twenty years from this night, what would you think? The magic mirror is here: you shall learn their destinies—and first that of your little life, Jessy.

Do you know this place? No, you never saw it; but you recognise the nature of these trees, this foliage—the cypress, the willow, the yew. Stone crosses like these are not unfamiliar to you, nor are these dim garlands of everlasting flowers. Here is the place; green sod and a grey marble headstone—Jessy sleeps below. She lived through an April day; much loved was she, much loving. She often, in her brief life, shed tears, she had frequent sorrows; she smiled between, gladdening whatever saw her. Her death was tranquil and happy in Rose's guardian arms, for Rose had been her stay and defence through many trials: the dying and the watching English girls were at that hour alone in a foreign country, and the soil of that country gave Jessy a grave.

Now, behold Rose, two years later. The crosses and garlands looked strange, but the hills and the woods of this landscape look still stranger. This, indeed, is far from England; remote must be the shores which wear that wild, luxuriant aspect. This is some virgin solitude: unknown birds flutter round the skirts of that

forest; no European river this, on whose banks Rose sits thinking. The little quiet Yorkshire girl is a lonely emigrant in some region of the southern hemisphere. Will she ever come back?

The three eldest of the family are all boys: Matthew, Mark, and Martin. They are seated together in that corner, engaged in some game. Observe their three heads: much alike at a first glance; at a second, different; at a third, contrasted. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, red-cheeked, are the whole trio; small English features they all possess; all own a blended resemblance to sire and mother, and yet a distinctive physiognomy, mark of a separate character, belongs to each.

I shall not say much about Matthew, the first-born of the house; though it is impossible to avoid gazing at him long, and conjecturing what qualities that visage hides or indicates. He is no plain-looking boy: that jet-black hair, white brow, high-coloured cheek, those quick, dark eyes, are good points in their way. How is it that, look as long as you will, there is but one object in the room, and that the most sinister, to which Matthew's face seems to bear an affinity, and of which, ever and anon, it reminds you strangely—the eruption of Vesuvius. Flame and shadow seem the component parts of that lad's soul: no daylight in it, and no sunshine, and no pure, cool moonbeam ever shone there. He has an English frame, but, apparently, not an English mind: you would say, an Italian stiletto in a sheath of British workmanship. He is crossed in the game — look at his scowl. Mr Yorke sees it, and what does he say? In a low voice, he pleads: "Mark and Martin, don't anger your brother." And this is ever the tone adopted by both parents. Theoretically, they decry partiality; no rights of primogeniture are to be allowed in that house; but Matthew is never to be vexed, never to be opposed: they avert

provocation from him assiduously as they would avert fire from a barrel of gunpowder. "Concede, conciliate," is their motto wherever he is concerned. The republicans are fast making a tyrant of their own flesh and blood. This the younger scions know and feel, and at heart they all rebel against the injustice: they cannot read their parents' motives; they only see the difference of treatment. The dragon's teeth are already sown amongst Mr Yorke's young olive-branches: discord will one day be the harvest.

Mark is a bonnie-looking boy, the most regular-featured of the family; he is exceedingly calm; his smile is shrewd; he can say the driest, most cutting things in the quietest of tones. Despite his tranquillity, a somewhat heavy brow speaks temper, and reminds you that the smoothest waters are not always the safest. Besides, he is too still, unmoved, phlegmatic, to be happy. Life will never have much joy in it for Mark: by the time he is five-and-twenty, he will wonder why people ever laugh, and think all fools who seem merry. Poetry will not exist for Mark, either in literature or in life; its best effusions will sound to him mere rant and jargon: enthusiasm will be his aversion and contempt. Mark will have no youth: while he looks juvenile and blooming, he will be already middle-aged in mind. His body is now fourteen years of age, but his soul is already thirty.

Martin, the youngest of the three, owns another nature. Life may, or may not, be brief for him; but it will certainly be brilliant: he will pass through all its illusions, half believe in them, wholly enjoy them, then outlive them. That boy is not handsome—not so handsome as either of his brothers: he is plain; there is a husk upon him, a dry shell, and he will wear it till he is near twenty; then he will put it off: about that period, he will make himself handsome. He will wear

uncouth manners till that age, perhaps homely garments; but the chrysalis will retain the power of transfiguring itself into the butterfly, and such transfiguration will, in due season, take place. For a space he will be vain, probably a downright puppy, eager for pleasure and desirous of admiration; athirst, too, for knowledge. He will want all that the world can give him, both of enjoyment and lore; he will, perhaps, take deep draughts at each fount. That thirst satisfied—what next? I know not. Martin might be a remarkable man: whether he will or not, the seer is powerless to predict: on that subject, there has been no open vision.

Take Mr Yorke's family in the aggregate, there is as much mental power in those six young heads, as much originality, as much activity and vigour of brain, as—divided amongst half-a-dozen commonplace broods—would give to each rather more than an average amount of sense and capacity. Mr Yorke knows this, and is proud of his race. Yorkshire has such families here and there amongst her hills and wolds—peculiar, racy, vigorous; of good blood and strong brain; turbulent somewhat in the pride of their strength, and intractable in the force of their native powers; wanting polish, wanting consideration, wanting docility, but sound, spirited, and true-bred as the eagle on the cliff or the steed in the steppe.

A low tap is heard at the parlour door; the boys have been making such a noise over their game, and little Jessy, besides, has been singing so sweet a Scotch song to her father—who delights in Scotch and Italian songs, and has taught his musical little daughter some of the best—that the ring at the outer door was not observed.

"Come in," says Mrs Yorke, in that conscientiously constrained and solemnised voice of hers, which ever modulates itself to a funereal dreariness of tone, though

the subject it is exercised upon be but to give orders for the making of a pudding in the kitchen, to bid the boys hang up their caps in the hall, or to call the girls to their sewing: "Come in!" And in came Robert Moore.

Moore's habitual gravity, as well as his abstemiousness (for the case of spirit-decanters is never ordered up when he pays an evening visit), has so far recommended him to Mrs Yorke, that she has not yet made him the subject of private animadversions with her husband: she has not yet found out that he is hampered by a secret intrigue which prevents him from marrying, or that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing; discoveries which she made at an early date after marriage concerning most of her husband's bachelor friends, and excluded them from her board accordingly; which part of her conduct, indeed, might be said to have its just and sensible, as well as its harsh side.

"Well, is it you?" she says to Mr Moore, as he comes up to her and gives his hand. "What are you roving about at this time of night for? You should be at home."

"Can a single man be said to have a home, madam?" he asks.

"Pooh!" says Mrs Yorke, who despises conventional smoothness quite as much as her husband does, and practises it as little, and whose plain speaking on all occasions is carried to a point calculated, sometimes, to awaken admiration, but oftener alarm—"Pooh! you need not talk nonsense to me; a single man can have a home if he likes. Pray, does not your sister make a home for you?"

"Not she," joined in Mr Yorke. "Hortense is an honest lass; but when I was Robert's age, I had five or six sisters, all as decent and proper as she is; but you see, Hesther, for all that, it did not hinder me from looking out for a wife."

"And sorely he has repented marrying me," added Mrs Yorke, who liked occasionally to crack a dry jest against matrimony, even though it should be at her own expense. "He has repented it in sackcloth and ashes, Robert Moore, as you may well believe when you see his punishment" (here she pointed to her children). "Who would burden themselves with such a set of great, rough lads as those, if they could help it? It is not only bringing them into the world, though that is bad enough, but they are all to feed, to clothe, to rear, to settle in life. Young sir, when you feel tempted to marry, think of our four sons and two daughters, and look twice before you leap."

"I am not tempted now, at any rate: I think these are not times for marrying or giving in marriage."

A lugubrious sentiment of this sort was sure to obtain Mrs Yorke's approbation: she nodded and groaned acquiescence; but in a minute she said—"I make little account of the wisdom of a Solomon of your age; it will be upset by the first fancy that crosses you. Meantime, sit down, sir: you can talk, I suppose, as well sitting as standing?"

This was her way of inviting her guest to take a chair; he had no sooner obeyed her, than little Jessy jumped from her father's knee, and ran into Mr Moore's arms, which were very promptly held out to receive her.

"You talk of marrying him," said she to her mother, quite indignantly, as she was lifted lightly to his knee, "and he is married now, or as good: he promised that I should be his wife last summer, the first time he saw me in my new white frock and blue sash. Didn't he, father?" (These children were not accustomed to say papa and mamma; their mother would allow no such "namby-pamby.")

"Ay, my little lassie, he promised; I'll bear witness.

But make him say it over again now, Jessy: such as he are only false loons."

"He is not false: he is too bonnie to be false," said Jessy, looking up to her tall sweetheart with the fullest confidence in his faith.

"Bonnie!" cried Mr Yorke; "that's the reason that he should be, and proof that he is—a scoundrel."

"But he looks too sorrowful to be false," here interposed a quiet voice from behind the father's chair. "If he were always laughing, I should think he forgot promises soon, but Mr Moore never laughs."

"Your sentimental buck is the greatest cheat of all, Rose," remarked Mr Yorke.

"He's not sentimental," said Rose.

Mr Moore turned to her with a little surprise, smiling at the same time.

"How do you know I am not sentimental, Rose?"

"Because I heard a lady say you were not."

"Voilà, qui devient intéressant!" exclaimed Mr Yorke, hitching his chair nearer the fire. "A lady! That has quite a romantic twang: we must guess who it is. Rosy, whisper the name low to your father: don't let *him* hear."

"Rose, don't be too forward to talk," here interrupted Mrs Yorke, in her usual kill-joy fashion; "nor Jessy either: it becomes all children, especially girls, to be silent in the presence of their elders."

"Why have we tongues, then?" asked Jessy pertly; while Rose only looked at her mother with an expression that seemed to say, she should take that maxim in, and think it over at her leisure. After two minutes' grave deliberation, she asked—"And why especially girls, mother?"

"Firstly, because I say so: and, secondly, because discretion and reserve is a girl's best wisdom."

"My dear madam," observed Moore, "what you

say is excellent: it reminds me, indeed, of my dear sister's observations; but really it is not applicable to these little ones. Let Rose and Jessy talk to me freely, or my chief pleasure in coming here is gone. I like their prattle: it does me good."

"Does it not?" asked Jessy. "More good than if the rough lads came round you: you call them rough, mother, yourself."

"Yes mignonne, a thousand times more good: I have rough lads enough about me all day long, poulet."

"There are plenty of people," continued she, "who take notice of the boys: all my uncles and aunts seem to think their nephews better than their nieces; and when gentlemen come here to dine, it is always Matthew, and Mark, and Martin, that are talked to, and never Rose and me. Mr Moore is *our* friend, and we'll keep him: but mind, Rose, he's not so much your friend as he is mine; he is my *particular acquaintance;* remember that!" And she held up her small hand with an admonitory gesture.

Rose was quite accustomed to be admonished by that small hand: her will daily bent itself to that of the impetuous little Jessy: she was guided—overruled by Jessy in a thousand things. On all occasions of show and pleasure, Jessy took the lead, and Rose fell quietly into the background; whereas, when the disagreeables of life—its work and privations were in question, Rose instinctively took upon her, in addition to her own share, what she could of her sister's. Jessy had already settled it in her mind that she, when she was old enough, was to be married; Rose, she decided, must be an old maid, to live with her, look after her children, keep her house. This state of things is not uncommon between two sisters, where one is plain and the other pretty; but in this case, if there *was* a difference in external appearance, Rose had the advantage: her face was more

regular-featured than that of the piquant little Jessy. Jessy, however, was destined to possess, along with sprightly intelligence and vivacious feeling, the gift of fascination, the power to charm when, where, and whom she would. Rose was to have a fine, generous soul, a noble intellect profoundly cultivated, a heart as true as steel, but the manner to attract was not to be hers.

"Now, Rose, tell me the name of this lady who denied that I was sentimental," urged Mr Moore.

Rose had no idea of tantalisation, or she would have held him a while in doubt; she answered briefly—"I can't: I don't know her name."

"Describe her to me: what was she like? Where did you see her?"

"When Jessy and I went to spend the day at Whinbury with Kate and Susan Pearson, who were just come home from school, there was a party at Mrs Pearson's, and some grown-up ladies were sitting in a corner of the drawing-room talking about you."

"Did you know none of them?"

"Hannah, and Harriet, and Dora, and Mary Sykes."

"Good. Were they abusing me, Rosy?"

"Some of them were: they called you a misanthrope: I remember the word—I looked for it in the dictionary when I came home: it means a man-hater."

"What besides?"

"Hannah Sykes said you were a solemn puppy."

"Better!" cried Mr Yorke, laughing. "Oh! excellent! Hannah—that's the one with the red hair: a fine girl, but half-witted."

"She has wit enough for me, it appears," said Moore. "A solemn puppy, indeed! Well, Rose, go on."

"Miss Pearson said she believed there was a good deal of affectation about you, and that with your dark hair

and pale face, you looked to her like some sort of a sentimental noodle."

Again Mr Yorke laughed: Mrs Yorke even joined in this time. "You see in what esteem you are held behind your back," said she; "yet I believe *that* Miss Pearson would like to catch you: she set her cap at you when you first came into the country, old as she is."

"And who contradicted her, Rosy?" inquired Moore.

"A lady whom I don't know, because she never visits here, though I see her every Sunday at church; she sits in the pew near the pulpit. I generally look at her, instead of looking at my prayer-book; for she is like a picture in our dining-room, that woman with the dove in her hand: at least she has eyes like it, and a nose too, a straight nose, that makes all her face look, somehow, what I call clear."

"And you don't know her!" exclaimed Jessy, in a tone of exceeding surprise. "That's so like Rose. Mr Moore, I often wonder in what sort of a world my sister lives; I am sure she does not live all her time in this: one is continually finding out that she is quite ignorant of some little matter which everybody else knows. To think of her going solemnly to church every Sunday, and looking all service-time at one particular person, and never so much as asking that person's name. She means Caroline Helstone, the Rector's niece: I remember all about it. Miss Helstone was quite angry with Anne Pearson: she said, 'Robert Moore is neither affected nor sentimental; you mistake his character utterly, or rather not one of you here knows anything about it.' Now, shall I tell you what she is like? I can tell what people are like, and how they are dressed, better than Rose can."

"Let us hear."

"She is nice; she is fair; she has a pretty white

slender throat; she has long curls, not stiff ones, they hang loose and soft, their colour is brown but not dark: she speaks quietly, with a clear tone; she never makes a bustle in moving; she often wears a grey silk dress; she is neat all over: her gowns, and her shoes, and her gloves always fit her. She is what I call a lady, and when I am as tall as she is, I mean to be like her. Shall I suit you if I am? Will you really marry me?"

Moore stroked Jessy's hair: for a minute he seemed as if he would draw her nearer to him, but instead he put her a little farther off.

"Oh! you won't have me? You push me away."

"Why, Jessy, you care nothing about me: you never come to see me now at the Hollow."

"Because you don't ask me."

Hereupon, Mr Moore gave both the little girls an invitation to pay him a visit next day, promising that, as he was going to Stilbro' in the morning, he would buy them each a present, of what nature he would not then declare, but they must come and see. Jessy was about to reply, when one of the boys unexpectedly broke in.

"I know that Miss Helstone you have all been palavering about: she's an ugly girl. I hate her! I hate all womenites. I wonder what they were made for."

"Martin!" said his father—for Martin it was—the lad only answered by turning his cynical young face, half-arch, half-truculent, towards the paternal chair. "Martin, my lad, thou'rt a swaggering whelp now; thou wilt some day be an outrageous puppy: but stick to those sentiments of thine. See, I'll write down the words now i' my pocket-book." (The senior took out a morocco-covered book, and deliberately wrote therein.) "Ten years hence, Martin, if thou and I be both alive at that day, I'll remind thee of that speech."

"I'll say the same then: I mean always to hate women; they're such dolls: they do nothing but dress themselves finely, and go swimming about to be admired. I'll never marry: I'll be a bachelor."

"Stick to it! stick to it! Hesther" (addressing his wife), "I was like him when I was his age, a regular misogamist; and, behold! by the time I was three-and-twenty—being then a tourist in France and Italy, and the Lord knows where!—I curled my hair every night before I went to bed, and wore a ring i' my ear, and would have worn one i' my nose if it had been the fashion—and all that I might make mysel' pleasing and charming to the ladies. Martin will do the like."

"Will I? Never! I've more sense. What a Guy you were, father! As to dressing, I make this vow: I'll never dress more finely than as you see me at present. Mr Moore, I'm clad in blue cloth from top to toe, and they laugh at me, and call me sailor at the grammar-school. I laugh louder at them, and say they are all magpies and parrots, with their coats one colour, and their waistcoats another, and their trousers a third. I'll always wear blue cloth, and nothing but blue cloth: it is beneath a human being's dignity to dress himself in parti-coloured garments."

"Ten years hence, Martin, no tailor's shop will have choice of colours varied enough for thy exacting taste; no perfumer's stores essences exquisite enough for thy fastidious senses."

Martin looked disdain, but vouchsafed no further reply. Meantime Mark, who for some minutes had been rummaging amongst a pile of books on a side-table, took the word. He spoke in a peculiarly slow, quiet voice, and with an expression of still irony in his face not easy to describe.

"Mr Moore," said he, "you think perhaps it was a compliment on Miss Caroline Helstone's part to say

you were not sentimental. I thought you appeared confused when my sisters told you the words, as if you felt flattered · you turned red, just like a certain vain little lad at our school, who always thinks proper to blush when he gets a rise in the class. For your benefit, Mr Moore, I've been looking up the word 'sentimental' in the dictionary, and I find it to mean 'tinctured with sentiment.' On examining further, 'sentiment' is explained to be, thought, idea, notion. A sentimental man, then, is one who has thoughts, ideas, notions; an unsentimental man is one destitute of thought, idea, or notion."

And Mark stopped: he did not smile, he did not look round for admiration: he had said his say, and was silent.

"Ma foi! mon ami," observed Mr Moore to Yorke; "ce sont vraiment des enfants terribles, que les vôtres!"

Rose, who had been listening attentively to Mark's speech, replied to him—"There are different kinds of thoughts, ideas, and notions," said she, "good and bad: sentimental must refer to the bad, or Miss Helstone must have taken it in that sense, for she was not blaming Mr Moore; she was defending him."

"That's my kind little advocate!" said Moore, taking Rose's hand.

"She was defending him," repeated Rose, "as I should have done had I been in her place, for the other ladies seemed to speak spitefully."

"Ladies always do speak spitefully," observed Martin; "it is the nature of womenites to be spiteful."

Matthew now, for the first time, opened his lips—"What a fool Martin is, to be always gabbling about what he does not understand."

"It is my privilege, as a freeman, to gabble on whatever subject I like," responded Martin.

"You use it, or rather abuse it, to such an extent," rejoined the elder brother, "that you prove you ought to have been a slave."

"A slave! a slave! That to a Yorke, and from a Yorke! This fellow," he added, standing up at the table, and pointing across it to Matthew—"this fellow forgets, what every cottier in Briarfield knows, that all born of our house have that arched instep under which water can flow—proof that there has not been a slave of the blood for three hundred years."

"Mountebank!" said Matthew.

"Lads, be silent!" exclaimed Mr Yorke. "Martin, you are a mischief-maker: there would have been no disturbance, but for you."

"Indeed! Is that correct? Did I begin, or did Matthew? Had I spoken to him when he accused me of gabbling like a fool?"

"A presumptuous fool!" repeated Matthew.

Here Mrs Yorke commenced rocking herself—rather a portentous movement with her, as it was occasionally followed, especially when Matthew was worsted in a conflict, by a fit of hysterics.

"I don't see why I should bear insolence from Matthew Yorke, or what right he has to use bad language to me," observed Martin.

"He has no right, my lad; but forgive your brother until seventy and seven times," said Mr Yorke soothingly.

"Always alike, and theory and practice always adverse!" murmured Martin as he turned to leave the room.

"Where art thou going, my son?" asked the father.

"Somewhere where I shall be safe from insult: if in this house I can find any such place."

Matthew laughed very insolently: Martin threw a strange look at him, and trembled through all his slight lad's frame, but he restrained himself.

"I suppose there is no objection to my withdrawing?" he inquired.

"No; go, my lad: but remember not to bear malice."

Martin went, and Matthew sent another insolent laugh after him. Rose, lifting her fair head from Moore's shoulder, against which, for a moment, it had been resting, said, as she directed a steady gaze to Matthew—"Martin is grieved, and you are glad; but I would rather be Martin than you: I dislike your nature."

Here Mr Moore, by way of averting, or at least escaping, a scene—which a sob from Mrs Yorke warned him was likely to come on—rose, and putting Jessy off his knee, he kissed her and Rose; reminding them, at the same time, to be sure and come to the Hollow in good time to-morrow afternoon: then, having taken leave of his hostess, he said to Mr Yorke—"May I speak a word with you?" and was followed by him from the room. Their brief conference took place in the hall.

"Have you employment for a good workman?" asked Moore.

"A nonsense question in these times, when you know that every master has many good workmen to whom he cannot give full employment."

"You must oblige me by taking on this man, if possible."

"My lad, I can take on no more hands to oblige all England."

"It does not signify; I must find him a place somewhere."

"Who is he?"

"William Farren."

"I know William; a right-down honest man is William."

"He has been out of work three months; he has a large family: we are sure they cannot live without wages: he was one of a deputation of cloth-dressers who came to me this morning to complain and threaten. William did not threaten: he only asked me to give them rather more time—to make my changes more slowly. You know I cannot do that: straitened on all sides as I am, I have nothing for it but to push on. I thought it would be idle to palaver long with them. I sent them away, after arresting a rascal amongst them, whom I hope to transport—a fellow who preaches at the chapel yonder sometimes."

"Not Moses Barraclough?"

"Yes."

"Ah! you've arrested him? Good! Then out of a scoundrel you're going to make a martyr: you've done a wise thing."

"I've done a right thing. Well, the short and the long of it is, I'm determined to get Farren a place, and I reckon on you to give him one."

"This is cool, however!" exclaimed Mr Yorke. "What right have you to reckon on me to provide for your dismissed workmen? What do I know about your Farrens and your Williams? I've heard he's an honest man; but am I to support all the honest men in Yorkshire? You may say that would be no great charge to undertake; but great or little, I'll none of it."

"Come, Mr Yorke, what can you find for him to do?"

"*I* find! You'll make me use language I'm not accustomed to use. I wish you would go home—here is the door—set off."

Moore sat down on one of the hall chairs.

"You can't give him work in your mill—good—but you have land: find him some occupation on your land. Mr Yorke."

"Bob, I thought you cared nothing about our 'lourdauds de paysans:' I don't understand this change."

"I do: the fellow spoke to me nothing but truth and sense. I answered him just as roughly as I did the rest, who jabbered mere gibberish. I couldn't make distinctions there and then: his appearance told what he had gone through lately clearer than his words: but where is the use of explaining? Let him have work."

"Let him have it yourself. If you are so very much in earnest, strain a point."

"If there was a point left in my affairs to strain, I would strain it till it cracked again; but I received letters this morning which show me pretty nearly where I stand, and it is not far off the end of the plank. My foreign market, at any rate, is gorged. If there is no change—if there dawns no prospect of peace—if the Orders in Council are not, at least, suspended, so as to open our way in the West—I do not know where I am to turn. I see no more light than if I were sealed in a rock; so that for me to pretend to offer a man a livelihood would be to do a dishonest thing."

"Come, let us take a turn on the front: it is a starlight night," said Mr Yorke.

They passed out, closing the front-door after them, and, side by side, paced the frost-white pavement to and fro.

"Settle about Farren at once," urged Mr Moore. "You have large fruit-gardens at York Mills: he is a good gardener: give him work there."

"Well, so be it. I'll send for him to-morrow, and we'll see. And now, my lad, you're concerned about the condition of your affairs?"

"Yes: a second failure—which I may delay, but which, at this moment, I see no way finally to avert—would blight the name of Moore completely; and you are aware I had fine intentions of paying off every debt, *and* re-establishing the old firm on its former basis."

"You want capital—that's all you want."

"Yes; but you might as well say that breath is all a dead man wants to live."

"I know—I know capital is not to be had for the asking; and if you were a married man, and had a family, like me, I should think your case pretty nigh desperate; but the young and unencumbered have chances peculiar to themselves. I hear gossip now and then about your being on the eve of marriage with this miss and that; but I suppose it is none of it true?"

"You may well suppose that: I think I am not in a position to be dreaming of marriage. Marriage! I cannot bear the word: it sounds so silly and utopian. I have settled it decidedly that marriage and love are superfluities, intended only for the rich, who live at ease, and have no need to take thought for the morrow; or desperations, the last and reckless joy of the deeply wretched, who never hope to rise out of the slough of their utter poverty."

"I should not think so if I were circumstanced as you are: I should think I could very likely get a wife with a few thousands, who would suit both me and my affairs."

"I wonder where?"

"Would you try, if you had a chance?"

"I don't know: it depends on—in short, it depends on many things."

"Would you take an old woman?"

"I'd rather break stones on the road."

"So would I. Would you take an ugly one?"

"Bah! I hate ugliness and delight in beauty: my eyes and heart, Yorke, take pleasure in a sweet, young, fair face, as they are repelled by a grim, rugged, meagre one: soft delicate lines and hues please—harsh ones prejudice me. I won't have an ugly wife."

"Not if she were rich?"

"Not if she were dressed in gems. I could not love —I could not fancy—I could not endure her. My taste must have satisfaction, or disgust would break out in despotism—or worse—freeze to utter iciness."

"What, Bob, if you married an honest, good-natured, and wealthy lass, though a little hard-favoured, couldn't you put up with the high cheek-bones, the rather wide mouth, and reddish hair?"

"I'll never try, I tell you. Grace at least I *will* have, and youth and symmetry—yes, and what I call beauty."

"And poverty, and a nursery full of bairns you can neither clothe nor feed, and very soon an anxious faded mother—and then bankruptcy, discredit—a life-long struggle."

"Let me alone, Yorke."

"If you are romantic, Robert, and especially if you are already in love, it is of no use talking."

"I am not romantic. I am stript of romance as bare as the white tenters in that field are of cloth."

"Always use such figures of speech, lad; I can understand them: and there is no love-affair to disturb your judgment?"

"I thought I had said enough on that subject before. Love for me? Stuff!"

"Well, then; if you are sound both in heart and head, there is no reason why you should not profit by a good chance if it offers: therefore, wait and see."

"You are quite oracular, Yorke."

"I think I am a bit i' that line. I promise ye naught and I advise ye naught; but I bid ye keep your heart up, and be guided by circumstances."

"My namesake the physician's almanack could not speak more guardedly."

In the meantime, I care naught about ye, Robert Moore: ye are nothing akin to me or mine, and whether

ye lose or find a fortune it mak's no difference to me. Go home, now: it has stricken ten. Miss Hortense will be wondering where ye are.

Chapter x.

OLD MAIDS.

TIME wore on, and spring matured. The surface of England began to look pleasant: her fields grew green, her hills fresh, her gardens blooming; but at heart she was no better: still her poor were wretched, still their employers were harassed: commerce, in some of its branches, seemed threatened with paralysis, for the war continued; England's blood was shed and her wealth lavished: all, it seemed, to attain most inadequate ends. Some tidings there were indeed occasionally of successes in the Peninsula, but these came in slowly; long intervals occurred between, in which no note was heard but the insolent self-felicitations of Bonaparte on his continued triumphs. Those who suffered from the results of the war felt this tedious, and—as they thought—hopeless, struggle against what their fears or their interests taught them to regard as an invincible power, most insufferable: they demanded peace on any terms: men like Yorke and Moore—and there were thousands whom the war placed where it placed them, shuddering on the verge of bankruptcy—insisted on peace with the energy of desperation.

They held meetings; they made speeches; they got up petitions to extort this boon: on what terms it was made they cared not.

All men, taken singly, are more or less selfish; and taken in bodies they are intensely so. The British

merchant is no exception to this rule: the mercantile classes illustrate it strikingly. These classes certainly think too exclusively of making money: they are too oblivious of every national consideration but that of extending England's (*i.e.*, their own) commerce. Chivalrous feeling, disinterestedness, pride in honour, is too dead in their hearts. A land ruled by them alone would too often make ignominious submission—not at all from the motives Christ teaches, but rather from those Mammon instils. During the late war, the tradesmen of England would have endured buffets from the French on the right cheek and on the left; their cloak they would have given to Napoleon, and then have politely offered him their coat also, nor would they have withheld their waistcoat if urged: they would have prayed permission only to retain their one other garment, for the sake of the purse in its pocket. Not one spark of spirit, not one symptom of resistance would they have shown till the hand of the Corsican bandit had grasped that beloved purse: *then*, perhaps, transfigured at once into British bull-dogs, they would have sprung at the robber's throat, and there they would have fastened, and there hung—inveterate, insatiable, till the treasure had been restored. Tradesmen, when they speak against war, always profess to hate it because it is a bloody and barbarous proceeding: you would think, to hear them talk, that they are peculiarly civilised—especially gentle and kindly of disposition to their fellow-men. This is not the case. Many of them are extremely narrow and cold-hearted, have no good feeling for any class but their own, are distant—even hostile to all others; call them useless; seem to question their right to exist; seem to grudge them the very air they breathe, and to think the circumstance of their eating, drinking, and living in decent houses, quite unjustifiable. They do not know what others do in the

way of helping, pleasing, or teaching their race; they will not trouble themselves to inquire; whoever is not in trade is accused of eating the bread of idleness, of passing a useless existence. Long may it be ere England really becomes a nation of shopkeepers!

We have already said that Moore was no self-sacrificing patriot, and we have also explained what circumstances rendered him specially prone to confine his attention and efforts to the furtherance of his individual interest; accordingly, when he felt himself urged a second time to the brink of ruin, none struggled harder than he against the influences which would have thrust him over. What he *could* do towards stirring agitation in the North against the war, he did, and he instigated others whose money and connections gave them more power than he possessed. Sometimes, by flashes, he felt there was little reason in the demands his party made on Government: when he heard of all Europe threatened by Bonaparte, and of all Europe arming to resist him; when he saw Russia menaced, and beheld Russia rising, incensed and stern, to defend her frozen soil, her wild provinces of serfs, her dark native despotism, from the tread, the yoke, the tyranny of a foreign victor, he knew that England, a free realm, could not *then* depute her sons to make concessions and propose terms to the unjust, grasping French leader. When news came from time to time of the movements of that MAN then representing England in the Peninsula; of his advance from success to success—that advance so deliberate but so unswerving, so circumspect but so certain, so "unhasting" but so "unresting;" when he read Lord Wellington's own despatches in the columns of the newspapers, documents written by Modesty to the dictation of Truth—Moore confessed at heart that a power was with the troops of Britain, of that vigilant, enduring, genuine,

unostentatious sort, which must win victory to the side it led, in the end. In the end! but that end, he thought, was yet far off; and meantime he, Moore, as an individual, would be crushed, his hopes ground to dust: it was himself he had to care for, his hopes he had to pursue, and he would fulfil his destiny.

He fulfilled it so vigorously, that ere long he came to a decisive rupture with his old Tory friend the Rector. They quarrelled at a public meeting, and afterwards exchanged some pungent letters in the newspapers. Mr Helstone denounced Moore as a Jacobin, ceased to see him, would not even speak to him when they met: he intimated also to his niece, very distinctly, that her communications with Hollow's Cottage must for the present cease; she must give up taking French lessons. The language, he observed, was a bad and frivolous one at the best, and most of the works it boasted were bad and frivolous, highly injurious in their tendency to weak female minds. He wondered (he remarked parenthetically) what noodle first made it the fashion to teach women French: nothing was more improper for them; it was like feeding a rickety child on chalk and water-gruel; Caroline must give it up, and give up her cousins too: they were dangerous people.

Mr Helstone quite expected opposition to this order; he expected tears. Seldom did he trouble himself about Caroline's movements, but a vague idea possessed him that she was fond of going to Hollow's Cottage: also he suspected that she liked Robert Moore's occasional presence at the Rectory. The Cossack had perceived that whereas if Malone stepped in of an evening to make himself sociable and charming, by pinching the ears of an aged black cat, which usually shared with Miss Helstone's feet the accommodation of her footstool, or by borrowing a fowling-piece, and

banging away at a tool-shed door in the garden while enough of daylight remained to show that conspicuous mark—keeping the passage and sitting-room doors meantime uncomfortably open for the convenience of running in and out to announce his failures and successes with noisy brusquerie—he had observed that under such entertaining circumstances Caroline had a trick of disappearing, tripping noiselessly upstairs, and remaining invisible till called down to supper. On the other hand, when Robert Moore was the guest, though he elicited no vivacities from the cat, did nothing to it, indeed, beyond occasionally coaxing it from the stool to his knee, and there letting it purr, climb to his shoulder, and rub its head against his cheek; though there was no ear-splitting cracking off of firearms, no diffusion of sulphurous gunpowder perfume, no noise, no boasting during his stay, that still Caroline sat in the room, and seemed to find wondrous content in the stitching of Jew-basket pin-cushions, and the knitting of Missionary-basket socks.

She was very quiet, and Robert paid her little attention, scarcely ever addressing his discourse to her; but Mr Helstone, not being one of those elderly gentlemen who are easily blinded, on the contrary, finding himself on all occasions extremely wide-awake, had watched them when they bade each other good-night: he had just seen their eyes meet once—only once. Some natures would have taken pleasure in the glance then surprised, because there was no harm and some delight in it. It was by no means a glance of mutual intelligence, for mutual love-secrets existed not between them: there was nothing then of craft and concealment to offend; only Mr Moore's eyes, looking into Caroline's, felt they were clear and gentle, and Caroline's eyes encountering Mr Moore's confessed they were manly and searching: each acknowledged

the charm in his or her own way. Moore smiled slightly, and Caroline coloured as slightly. Mr Helstone could, on the spot, have rated them both: they annoyed him; why?—impossible to say. If you had asked him what Moore merited at that moment, he would have said "a horsewhip;" if you had inquired into Caroline's deserts, he would have adjudged her a box on the ear; if you had further demanded the reason of such chastisements, he would have stormed against flirtation and love-making, and vowed he would have no such folly going on under his roof.

These private considerations, combined with political reasons, fixed his resolution of separating the cousins. He announced his will to Caroline one evening, as she was sitting at work near the drawing-room window: her face was turned towards him, and the light fell full upon it. It had struck him a few minutes before that she was looking paler and quieter than she used to look; it had not escaped him either that Robert Moore's name had never, for some three weeks past, dropped from her lips; nor during the same space of time had that personage made his appearance at the Rectory. Some suspicion of clandestine meetings haunted him; having but an indifferent opinion of women, he always suspected them: he thought they needed constant watching. It was in a tone drily significant he desired her to cease her daily visits to the Hollow; he expected a start, a look of deprecation: the start he saw, but it was a very slight one; no look whatever was directed to him.

"Do you hear me?" he asked.

"Yes, uncle."

"Of course you mean to attend to what I say?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And there must be no letter-scribbling to your cousin Hortense: no intercourse whatever. I do not

approve of the principles of the family: they are Jacobinical."

"Very well," said Caroline quietly. She acquiesced then: there was no vexed flushing of the face, no gathering tears: the shadowy thoughtfulness which had covered her features ere Mr Helstone spoke remained undisturbed: she was obedient.

Yes, perfectly; because the mandate coincided with her own previous judgment; because it was now become pain to her to go to Hollow's Cottage; nothing met her there but disappointment: hope and love had quitted that little tenement, for Robert seemed to have deserted its precincts. Whenever she asked after him—which she very seldom did, since the mere utterance of his name made her face grow hot—the answer was, he was from home, or he was quite taken up with business: Hortense feared he was killing himself by application: he scarcely ever took a meal in the house; he lived in the counting-house.

At church only Caroline had the chance of seeing him, and there she rarely looked at him: it was both too much pain and too much pleasure to look: it excited too much emotion; and that it was all wasted emotion, she had learned well to comprehend.

Once, on a dark, wet Sunday, when there were few people at church, and when especially certain ladies were absent, of whose observant faculties and tomahawk tongues Caroline stood in awe, she had allowed her eye to seek Robert's pew, and to rest a while on its occupant. He was there alone: Hortense had been kept at home by prudent considerations relative to the rain and a new spring "chapeau." During the sermon, he sat with folded arms and eyes cast down, looking very sad and abstracted. When depressed, the very hue of his face seemed more dusk than when he smiled, and to-day cheek and forehead wore their most tintless and

sober olive. By instinct Caroline knew, as she examined that clouded countenance, that his thoughts were running in no familiar or kindly channel; that they were far away, not merely from her, but from all which she could comprehend, or in which she could sympathise. Nothing that they had ever talked of together was now in his mind: he was wrapped from her by interests and responsibilities in which it was deemed such as she could have no part.

Caroline meditated in her own way on the subject; speculated on his feelings, on his life, on his fears, on his fate; mused over the mystery of "business," tried to comprehend more about it than had ever been told her—to understand its perplexities, liabilities, duties, exactions; endeavoured to realise the state of mind of a "man of business," to enter into it, feel what he would feel, aspire to what he would aspire. Her earnest wish was to see things as they were, and not to be romantic. By dint of effort she contrived to get a glimpse of the light of truth here and there, and hoped that scant ray might suffice to guide her.

"Different, indeed," she concluded, "is Robert's mental condition to mine: I think only of him; he has no room, no leisure to think of me. The feeling called love is and has been for two years the predominant emotion of my heart: always there, always awake, always astir: quite other feelings absorb his reflections, and govern his faculties. He is rising now, going to leave the church, for service is over. Will he turn his head towards this pew?—no—not once—he has not one look for me: that is hard: a kind glance would have made me happy till to-morrow; I have not got it; he would not give it; he is gone. Strange that grief should now almost choke me, because another human being's eye has failed to greet mine."

That Sunday evening, Mr Malone coming, as usual,

to pass it with his Rector, Caroline withdrew after tea to her chamber. Fanny, knowing her habits, had lit her a cheerful little fire, as the weather was so gusty and chill. Closeted there, silent and solitary, what could she do but think? She noiselessly paced to and fro the carpeted floor, her head drooped, her hands folded: it was irksome to sit: the current of reflection ran rapidly through her mind: to-night she was mutely excited.

Mute was the room,—mute the house. The double door of the study muffled the voices of the gentlemen: the servants were quiet in the kitchen, engaged with books their young mistress had lent them; books which she had told them were "fit for Sunday reading." And she herself had another of the same sort open on the table, but she could not read it: its theology was incomprehensible to her, and her own mind was too busy, teeming, wandering, to listen to the language of another mind.

Then, too, her imagination was full of pictures; images of Moore; scenes where he and she had been together; winter fireside sketches; a glowing landscape of a hot summer afternoon passed with him in the bosom of Nunnely Wood: divine vignettes of mild spring or mellow autumn moments, when she had sat at his side in Hollow's Copse, listening to the call of the May cuckoo, or sharing the September treasure of nuts and ripe blackberries—a wild dessert which it was her morning's pleasure to collect in a little basket, and cover with green leaves and fresh blossoms, and her afternoon's delight to administer to Moore, berry by berry, and nut by nut, like a bird feeding its fledgling.

Robert's features and form were with her; the sound of his voice was quite distinct in her ear; his few caresses seemed renewed. But these joys being hollow, were, ere long, crushed in: the pictures faded, the voice

failed, the visionary clasp melted chill from her hand, and where the warm seal of lips had made impress on her forehead, it felt now as if a sleety rain-drop had fallen. She returned from an enchanted region to the real world: for Nunnely Wood in June, she saw her narrow chamber; for the songs of birds in alleys, she heard the rain on her casement; for the sigh of the south wind, came the sob of the mournful east; and for Moore's manly companionship, she had the thin illusion of her own dim shadow on the wall. Turning from the pale phantom which reflected herself in its outline, and her reverie in the drooped attitude of its dim head and colourless tresses, she sat down—inaction would suit the frame of mind into which she was now declining—she said to herself—"I have to live, perhaps, till seventy years. As far as I know, I have good health: half a century of existence may lie before me. How am I to occupy it? What am I to do to fill the interval of time which spreads between me and the grave?"

She reflected.

"I shall not be married, it appears," she continued. "I suppose, as Robert does not care for me, I shall never have a husband to love, nor little children to take care of. Till lately I had reckoned securely on the duties and affections of wife and mother to occupy my existence. I considered, somehow, as a matter of course, that I was growing up to the ordinary destiny, and never troubled myself to seek any other; but now, I perceive plainly, I may have been mistaken. Probably I shall be an old maid. I shall live to see Robert married to some one else, some rich lady: I shall never marry. What was I created for, I wonder? Where is my place in the world?"

She mused again.

"Ah! I see," she pursued presently: "that is the question which most old maids are puzzled to solve:

other people solve it for them by saying, 'Your place is to do good to others, to be helpful whenever help is wanted.' That is right in some measure, and a very convenient doctrine for the people who hold it; but I perceive that certain sets of human beings are very apt to maintain that other sets should give up their lives to them and their service, and then they requite them by praise: they call them devoted and virtuous. Is this enough? Is it to live? Is there not a terrible hollowness, mockery, want, craving, in that existence which is given away to others, for want of something of your own to bestow it on? I suspect there is. Does virtue lie in abnegation of self? I do not believe it. Undue humility makes tyranny; weak concession creates selfishness. The Romish religion especially teaches renunciation of self, submission to others, and nowhere are found so many grasping tyrants as in the ranks of the Romish priesthood. Each human being has his share of rights. I suspect it would conduce to the happiness and welfare of all, if each knew his allotment, and held to it as tenaciously as the martyr to his creed. Queer thoughts these, that surge in my mind: are they right thoughts? I am not certain.

"Well, life is short at the best: seventy years, they say, pass like a vapour, like a dream when one awaketh; and every path trod by human feet terminates in one bourne—the grave: the little chink in the surface of this great globe—the furrow where the mighty husbandman with the scythe deposits the seed he has shaken from the ripe stem; and there it falls, decays, and thence it springs again, when the world has rolled round a few times more. So much for the body: the soul meantime wings its long flight upward, folds its wings on the brink of the sea of fire and glass, and gazing down through the burning clearness, finds there mirrored the vision of the Christian's triple Godhead: the Sovereign

Father; the mediating Son; the Creator Spirit. Such words, at least, have been chosen to express what is inexpressible, to describe what baffles description. The soul's real hereafter, who shall guess?"

Her fire was decayed to its last cinder; Malone had departed; and now the study bell rang for prayers.

The next day Caroline had to spend altogether alone, her uncle being gone to dine with his friend Dr Boultby, vicar of Whinbury. The whole time she was talking inwardly in the same strain; looking forwards, asking what she was to do with life. Fanny, as she passed in and out of the room occasionally, intent on housemaid errands, perceived that her young mistress sat very still. She was always in the same place, always bent industriously over a piece of work: she did not lift her head to speak to Fanny, as her custom was; and when the latter remarked that the day was fine, and she ought to take a walk, she only said—"It is cold."

"You are very diligent at that sewing, Miss Caroline," continued the girl, approaching her little table.

"I am tired of it, Fanny."

"Then why do you go on with it? Put it down: read, or do something to amuse you."

"It is solitary in this house, Fanny: don't you think so?"

"I don't find it so, Miss. Me and Eliza are company for one another; but you are quite too still—you should visit more. Now, be persuaded; go upstairs and dress yourself smart, and go and take tea, in a friendly way, with Miss Mann or Miss Ainley: I am certain either of those ladies would be delighted to see you."

"But their houses are dismal: they are both old maids. I am certain old maids are a very unhappy race."

"Not they, miss: they can't be unhappy; they take such care of themselves. They are all selfish."

"Miss Ainley is not selfish, Fanny: she is always doing good. How devotedly kind she was to her step-mother, as long as the old lady lived; and now when she is quite alone in the world, without brother or sister, or any one to care for her, how charitable she is to the poor, as far as her means permit! Still nobody thinks much of her, or has pleasure in going to see her: and how gentlemen always sneer at her!"

"They shouldn't, miss; I believe she is a good woman: but gentlemen think only of ladies' looks."

"I'll go and see her," exclaimed Caroline, starting up: "and if she asks me to stay to tea, I'll stay. How wrong it is to neglect people because they are not pretty, and young, and merry! And I will certainly call to see Miss Mann, too: she may not be amiable; but what has made her unamiable? What has life been to her?"

Fanny helped Miss Helstone to put away her work, and afterwards assisted her to dress.

"*You'll* not be an old maid, Miss Caroline," she said, as she tied the sash of her brown-silk frock, having previously smoothed her soft, full, and shining curls; "there are no signs of an old maid about you."

Caroline looked at the little mirror before her, and she thought there were some signs. She could see that she was altered within the last month; that the hues of her complexion were paler, her eyes changed —a wan shade seemed to circle them, her countenance was dejected: she was not, in short, so pretty or so fresh as she used to be. She distantly hinted this to Fanny, from whom she got no direct answer, only a remark that people did vary in their looks; but that at her age a little falling away signified nothing,—she would soon come round again, and be plumper and

rosier than ever. Having given this assurance, Fanny showed singular zeal in wrapping her up in warm shawls and handkerchiefs, till Caroline, nearly smothered with the weight, was fain to resist further additions.

She paid her visits: first to Miss Mann, for this was the most difficult point: Miss Mann was certainly not quite a lovable person. Till now, Caroline had always unhesitatingly declared she disliked her, and more than once she had joined her cousin Robert in laughing at some of her peculiarities. Moore was not habitually given to sarcasm, especially on anything humbler or weaker than himself; but he had once or twice happened to be in the room when Miss Mann had made a call on his sister, and after listening to her conversation and viewing her features for a time, he had gone out into the garden where his little cousin was tending some of his favourite flowers, and while standing near and watching her, he had amused himself with comparing fair youth—delicate and attractive—with shrivelled eld, livid and loveless, and in jestingly repeating to a smiling girl the vinegar discourse of a cankered old maid. Once on such an occasion, Caroline had said to him, looking up from the luxuriant creeper she was binding to its frame, "Ah! Robert, you do not like old maids. I, too, should come under the lash of your sarcasm, if I were an old maid."

"You an old maid!" he had replied. "A piquant notion suggested by lips of that tint and form. I can fancy you, though, at forty, quietly dressed, pale and sunk, but still with that straight nose, white forehead, and those soft eyes. I suppose, too, you will keep your voice, which has another 'timbre' than that hard, deep organ of Miss Mann's. Courage, Cary!—even at fifty you will not be repulsive."

"Miss Mann did not make herself, or tune her voice, Robert."

"Nature made her in the mood in which she makes her briars and thorns; whereas for the creation of some women, she reserves the May morning hours, when with light and dew she woos the primrose from the turf, and the lily from the wood-moss."

Ushered into Miss Mann's little parlour, Caroline found her, as she always found her, surrounded by perfect neatness, cleanliness, and comfort; (after all, is it not a virtue in old maids that solitude rarely makes them negligent or disorderly?) no dust on her polished furniture, none on her carpet, fresh flowers in the vase on her table, a bright fire in the grate. She herself sat primly and somewhat grimly-tidy in a cushioned rocking-chair, her hands busied with some knitting: this was her favourite work, as it required the least exertion. She scarcely rose as Caroline entered; to avoid excitement was one of Miss Mann's aims in life: she had been composing herself ever since she came down in the morning, and had just attained a certain lethargic state of tranquillity when the visitor's knock at the door startled her, and undid her day's work. She was scarcely pleased, therefore, to see Miss Helstone: she received her with reserve, bade her be seated with austerity, and when she got her placed opposite, she fixed her with her eye.

This was no ordinary doom—to be fixed with Miss Mann's eye. Robert Moore had undergone it once, and had never forgotten the circumstance.

He considered it quite equal to anything Medusa could do: he professed to doubt whether, since that infliction, his flesh had been quite what it was before—whether there was not something stony in its texture. The gaze had had such an effect on him as to drive him promptly from the apartment and house; it had even sent him straightway up to the Rectory, where he had

appeared in Caroline's presence with a very queer face, and amazed her by demanding a cousinly salute on the spot, to rectify a damage that had been done him.

Certainly Miss Mann had a formidable eye for one of the softer sex: it was prominent, and showed a great deal of the white, and looked as steadily, as unwinkingly, at you as if it were a steel ball soldered in her head; and when, while looking, she began to talk in an indescribably dry monotonous tone—a tone without vibration or inflection—you felt as if a graven image of some bad spirit were addressing you. But it was all a figment of fancy, a matter of surface. Miss Mann's goblin-grimness scarcely went deeper than the angel-sweetness of hundreds of beauties. She was a perfectly honest, conscientious woman, who had performed duties in her day from whose severe anguish many a human Peri, gazelle-eyed, silken-tressed, and silver-tongued, would have shrunk appalled: she had passed alone through protracted scenes of suffering, exercised rigid self-denial, made large sacrifices of time, money, health, for those who had repaid her only by ingratitude, and now her main—almost her sole—fault was, that she was censorious.

Censorious she certainly was. Caroline had not sat five minutes ere her hostess, still keeping her under the spell of that dread and Gorgon gaze, began flaying alive certain of the families in the neighbourhood. She went to work at this business in a singularly cool, deliberate manner, like some surgeon practising with his scalpel on a lifeless subject: she made few distinctions; she allowed scarcely any one to be good; she dissected impartially almost all her acquaintance. If her auditress ventured now and then to put in a palliative word, she set it aside with a certain disdain. Still, though thus pitiless in moral anatomy, she was no scandal-monger: she never disseminated really malignant or dangerous

reports: it was not her heart so much as her temper that was wrong.

Caroline made this discovery for the first time to-day; and moved thereby to regret divers unjust judgments she had more than once passed on the crabbed old maid, she began to talk to her softly, not in sympathising words, but with a sympathising voice. The loneliness of her condition struck her visitor in a new light; as did also the character of her ugliness—a bloodless pallor of complexion, and deeply worn lines of feature. The girl pitied the solitary and afflicted woman; her looks told what she felt: a sweet countenance is never so sweet as when the moved heart animates it with compassionate tenderness. Miss Mann, seeing such a countenance raised to her, was touched in her turn: she acknowledged her sense of the interest thus unexpectedly shown in her, who usually met with only coldness and ridicule, by replying to her candidly. Communicative on her own affairs she usually was not, because no one cared to listen to her; but to-day she became so, and her confidant shed tears as she heard her speak: for she told of cruel, slow-wasting, obstinate sufferings. Well might she be corpse-like; well might she look grim, and never smile; well might she wish to avoid excitement, to gain and retain composure! Caroline, when she knew all, acknowledged that Miss Mann was rather to be admired for fortitude than blamed for moroseness. Reader! when you behold an aspect for whose constant gloom and frown you cannot account, whose unvarying cloud exasperates you by its apparent causelessness, be sure that there is a canker somewhere, and a canker not the less deeply corroding because concealed.

Miss Mann felt that she was understood partly, and wished to be understood further; for however old, plain, humble, desolate, afflicted we may be, so long as our

hearts preserve the feeblest spark of life, they preserve also, shivering near that pale ember, a starved, ghostly longing for appreciation and affection. To this extenuated spectre, perhaps, a crumb is not thrown once a year; but when ahungered and athirst to famine—when all humanity has forgotten the dying tenant of a decaying house—Divine Mercy remembers the mourner, and a shower of manna falls for lips that earthly nutriment is to pass no more. Biblical promises, heard first in health, but then unheeded, come whispering to the couch of sickness: it is felt that a pitying God watches what all mankind have forsaken; the tender compassion of Jesus is recalled and relied on: the faded eye, gazing beyond Time, sees a Home, a Friend, a Refuge in Eternity.

Miss Mann, drawn on by the still attention of her listener, proceeded to allude to circumstances in her past life. She spoke like one who tells the truth—simply, and with a certain reserve: she did not boast, nor did she exaggerate. Caroline found that the old maid had been a most devoted daughter and sister, an unwearied watcher by lingering deathbeds; that to prolonged and unrelaxing attendance on the sick, the malady that now poisoned her own life owed its origin; that to one wretched relative she had been a support and succour in the depths of self-earned degradation, and that it was still her hand which kept him from utter destitution. Miss Helstone stayed the whole evening, omitting to pay her other intended visit; and when she left Miss Mann, it was with the determination to try in future to excuse her faults, never again to make light of her peculiarities or to laugh at her plainness; and, above all things, not to neglect her, but to come once a week, and to offer her, from one human heart at least, the homage of affection and respect: she felt she could now sincerely give her a small tribute of each feeling.

Caroline, on her return, told Fanny she was very glad she had gone out, as she felt much better for the visit. The next day she failed not to seek Miss Ainley. This lady was in narrower circumstances than Miss Mann, and her dwelling was more humble: it was, however, if possible, yet more exquisitely clean; though the decayed gentlewoman could not afford to keep a servant, but waited on herself, and had only the occasional assistance of a little girl who lived in a cottage near.

Not only was Miss Ainley poorer, but she was even plainer than the other old maid. In her first youth she must have been ugly; now, at the age of fifty, she was *very* ugly. At first sight, all but peculiarly well-disciplined minds were apt to turn from her with annoyance: to conceive against her a prejudice, simply on the ground of her unattractive look. Then she was prim in dress and manner: she looked, spoke, and moved the complete old maid.

Her welcome to Caroline was formal, even in its kindness—for it was kind; but Miss Helstone excused this. She knew something of the benevolence of the heart which beat under that starched kerchief; all the neighbourhood—at least all the female neighbourhood—knew something of it: no one spoke against Miss Ainley except lively young gentlemen, and inconsiderate old ones, who declared her hideous.

Caroline was soon at home in that tiny parlour; a kind hand took from her her shawl and bonnet, and installed her in the most comfortable seat near the fire. The young and the antiquated woman were presently deep in kindly conversation, and soon Caroline became aware of the power a most serene, unselfish, and benignant mind could exercise over those to whom it was developed. She talked never of herself—always of others. Their faults she passed over; her theme was

their wants, which she sought to supply; their sufferings, which she longed to alleviate. She was religious—a professor of religion—what some would call "a saint," and she referred to religion often in sanctioned phrase—in phrase which those who possess a perception of the ridiculous, without owning the power of exactly testing and truly judging character, would certainly have esteemed a proper subject for satire—a matter for mimicry and laughter. They would have been hugely mistaken for their pains. Sincerity is never ludicrous; it is always respectable. Whether truth—be it religious or moral truth—speak eloquently and in well-chosen language or not, its voice should be heard with reverence. Let those who cannot nicely, and with certainty, discern the difference between the tones of hypocrisy and those of sincerity, never presume to laugh at all, lest they should have the miserable misfortune to laugh in the wrong place, and commit impiety when they think they are achieving wit.

Not from Miss Ainley's own lips did Caroline hear of her good works; but she knew much of them nevertheless; her beneficence was the familiar topic of the poor in Briarfield. They were not works of almsgiving: the old maid was too poor to give much, though she straitened herself to privation that she might contribute her mite when needful: they were the works of a Sister of Charity, far more difficult to perform than those of a Lady Bountiful. She would watch by any sick-bed: she seemed to fear no disease; she would nurse the poorest whom none else would nurse: she was serene, humble, kind, and equable through everything.

For this goodness she got but little reward in this life. Many of the poor became so accustomed to her services that they hardly thanked her for them: the rich heard them mentioned with wonder, but were silent, from a sense of shame at the difference between

her sacrifices and their own. Many ladies, however, respected her deeply: they could not help it; one gentleman—one only—gave her his friendship and perfect confidence: this was Mr Hall, the vicar of Nunnely. He said, and said truly, that her life came nearer the life of Christ than that of any other human being he had ever met with. You must not think, reader, that in sketching Miss Ainley's character, I depict a figment of imagination—no—we seek the originals of such portraits in real life only.

Miss Helstone studied well the mind and heart now revealed to her. She found no high intellect to admire: the old maid was merely sensible; but she discovered so much goodness, so much usefulness, so much mildness, patience, truth, that she bent her own mind before Miss Ainley's in reverence. What was her love of nature, what was her sense of beauty, what were her more varied and fervent emotions, what was her deeper power of thought, what her wider capacity to comprehend, compared to the practical excellence of this good woman? Momently, they seemed only beautiful forms of selfish delight; mentally, she trod them under foot.

It is true, she still felt with pain that the life which made Miss Ainley happy could not make her happy: pure and active as it was, in her heart she deemed it deeply dreary because it was so loveless—to her ideas, so forlorn. Yet, doubtless, she reflected, it needed only habit to make it practicable and agreeable to any one: it was despicable, she felt, to pine sentimentally, to cherish secret griefs, vain memories; to be inert, to waste youth in aching languor, to grow old doing nothing.

"I will bestir myself," was her resolution, "and try to be wise if I cannot be good."

She proceeded to make inquiry of Miss Ainley, if she could help her in anything. Miss Ainley, glad of

an assistant, told her that she could, and indicated some poor families in Briarfield that it was desirable she should visit; giving her likewise, at her further request, some work to do for certain poor women who had many children, and who were unskilled in using the needle for themselves.

Caroline went home, laid her plans, and took a resolve not to swerve from them. She allotted a certain portion of her time for her various studies, and a certain portion for doing anything Miss Ainley might direct her to do; the remainder was to be spent in exercise; not a moment was to be left for the indulgence of such fevered thoughts as had poisoned last Sunday evening.

To do her justice, she executed her plans conscientiously, perseveringly. It was very hard work at first —it was even hard work to the end, but it helped her to stem and keep down anguish: it forced her to be employed; it forbade her to brood; and gleams of satisfaction chequered her grey life here and there when she found she had done good, imparted pleasure, or allayed suffering.

Yet I must speak truth; these efforts brought her neither health of body nor continued peace of mind: with them all, she wasted, grew more joyless and more wan; with them all, her memory kept harping on the name of Robert Moore; an elegy over the past still rung constantly in her ear; a funereal inward cry haunted and harassed her: the heaviness of a broken spirit, and of pining and palsying faculties, settled slow on her buoyant youth. Winter seemed conquering her spring: the mind's soil and its treasures were freezing gradually to barren stagnation.

Chapter xj.

FIELDHEAD.

YET Caroline refused tamely to succumb: she had native strength in her girl's heart, and she used it. Men and women never struggle so hard as when they struggle alone, without witness, counsellor, or confidant; unencouraged, unadvised, and unpitied.

Miss Helstone was in this position. Her sufferings were her only spur; and being very real and sharp, they roused her spirit keenly. Bent on victory over a mortal pain, she did her best to quell it. Never had she been seen so busy, so studious, and, above all, so active. She took walks in all weathers—long walks in solitary directions. Day by day she came back in the evening, pale and wearied-looking, yet seemingly not fatigued; for still, as soon as she had thrown off her bonnet and shawl, she would, instead of resting, begin to pace her apartment: sometimes she would not sit down till she was literally faint. She said she did this to tire herself well, that she might sleep soundly at night. But if that was her aim it was unattained, for at night, when others slumbered, she was tossing on her pillow, or sitting at the foot of her couch in the darkness, forgetful, apparently, of the necessity of seeking repose. Often, unhappy girl! she was crying—crying in a sort of intolerable despair; which, when it rushed over her, smote down her strength, and reduced her to childlike helplessness.

When thus prostrate, temptations besieged her: weak suggestions whispered in her weary heart to write to Robert, and say that she was unhappy because she was forbidden to see him and Hortense, and that she feared he would withdraw his friendship (not love) from her, and forget her entirely, and begging him to remember

her, and sometimes to write to her. One or two such letters she actually indited, but she never sent them: shame and good sense forbade.

At last the life she led reached the point when it seemed she could bear it no longer; that she must seek and find a change somehow, or her heart and head would fail under the pressure which strained them. She longed to leave Briarfield, to go to some very distant place. She longed for something else: the deep, secret, anxious yearning to discover and know her mother strengthened daily; but with the desire was coupled a doubt, a dread —if she knew her, could she love her? There was cause for hesitation, for apprehension on this point: never in her life had she heard that mother praised: whoever mentioned her, mentioned her coolly. Her uncle seemed to regard his sister-in-law with a sort of tacit antipathy; an old servant, who had lived with Mrs James Helstone for a short time after her marriage, whenever she referred to her former mistress, spoke with chilling reserve: sometimes she called her "queer," sometimes she said she did not understand her. These expressions were ice to the daughter's heart; they suggested the conclusion that it was perhaps better never to know her parent, than to know her and not like her.

But one project could she frame whose execution seemed likely to bring her a hope of relief; it was to take a situation, to be a governess—she could do nothing else. A little incident brought her to the point, when she found courage to break her design to her uncle.

Her long and late walks lay always, as has been said, on lonely roads; but in whatever direction she had rambled, whether along the drear skirts of Stilbro' Moor, or over the sunny stretch of Nunnely Common, her homeward path was still so contrived as to lead her near the Hollow. She rarely descended the den, but she visited its brink at twilight almost as regularly as the

stars rose over the hill-crests. Her resting-place was at a certain stile under a certain old thorn: thence she could look down on the cottage, the mill, the dewy garden-ground, the still, deep dam; thence was visible the well-known counting-house window, from whose panes at a fixed hour shot, suddenly bright, the ray of the well-known lamp. Her errand was to watch for this ray: her reward to catch it, sometimes sparkling bright in clear air, sometimes shimmering dim through mist, and anon flashing broken between slant lines of rain—for she came in all weathers.

There were nights when it failed to appear: she knew then that Robert was from home, and went away doubly sad; whereas its kindling rendered her elate, as though she saw in it the promise of some indefinite hope. If, while she gazed, a shadow bent between the light and lattice, her heart leaped—that eclipse was Robert: she had seen him. She would return home comforted, carrying in her mind a clearer vision of his aspect, a distincter recollection of his voice, his smile, his bearing; and, blent with these impressions, was often a sweet persuasion that, if she could get near him, his heart might welcome her presence yet: that at this moment he might be willing to extend his hand and draw her to him, and shelter her at his side as he used to do. That night, though she might weep as usual, she would fancy her tears less scalding; the pillow they watered seemed a little softer; the temples pressed to that pillow ached less.

The shortest path from the Hollow to the Rectory wound near a certain mansion, the same under whose lone walls Malone passed on that night-journey mentioned in an early chapter of this work—the old and tenantless dwelling yclept Fieldhead. Tenantless by the proprietor it had been for ten years, but it was no ruin; Mr Yorke had seen it kept in good repair, and

an old gardener and his wife had lived in it, cultivated the grounds, and maintained the house in habitable condition.

If Fieldhead had few other merits as a building, it might at least be termed picturesque: its irregular architecture, and the grey and mossy colouring communicated by time, gave it a just claim to this epithet. The old latticed windows, the stone porch, the walls, the roof, the chimney-stacks, were rich in crayon touches and sepia lights and shades. The trees behind were fine, bold, and spreading; the cedar on the lawn in front was grand, and the granite urns on the garden wall, the fretted arch of the gateway, were, for an artist, as the very desire of the eye.

One mild May evening, Caroline passing near about moonrise, and feeling, though weary, unwilling yet to go home, where there was only the bed of thorns and the night of grief to anticipate, sat down on the mossy ground near the gate, and gazed through towards cedar and mansion. It was a still night—calm, dewy, cloudless: the gables, turned to the west, reflected the clear amber of the horizon they faced; the oaks behind were black; the cedar was blacker; under its dense, raven boughs a glimpse of sky opened gravely blue: it was full of the moon, which looked solemnly and mildly down on Caroline from beneath that sombre canopy.

She felt this night and prospect mournfully lovely. She wished she could be happy: she wished she could know inward peace: she wondered Providence had no pity on her, and would not help or console her. Recollections of happy trysts of lovers commemorated in old ballads, returned on her mind: she thought such tryst in such scene would be blissful. Where now was Robert? she asked: not at the Hollow: she had watched for his lamp long, and had not seen it. She questioned within herself whether she and Moore were

ever destined to meet and speak again. Suddenly the door within the stone porch of the hall opened, and two men came out: one elderly and white-headed, the other young, dark-haired, and tall. They passed across the lawn, out through a portal in the garden wall: Caroline saw them cross the road, pass the stile, descend the fields; she saw them disappear. Robert Moore had passed before her with his friend Mr Yorke: neither had seen her.

The apparition had been transient—scarce seen ere gone; but its electric passage left her veins kindled, her soul insurgent. It found her despairing: it left her desperate—two different states.

"Oh! had he but been alone! Had he but seen me!" was her cry, "he would have said something; he would have given me his hand. He *does*, he *must* love me a little: he would have shown some token of affection: in his eye, on his lips, I should have read comfort: but the chance is lost. The wind—the cloud's shadow does not pass more silently, more emptily than he. I have been mocked, and Heaven is cruel!"

Thus, in the utter sickness of longing and disappointment, she went home.

The next morning at breakfast, when she appeared white-cheeked and miserable-looking as one who had seen a ghost, she inquired of Mr Helstone—"Have you any objection, uncle, to my inquiring for a situation in a family?"

Her uncle, ignorant as the table supporting his coffee-cup of all his niece had undergone and was undergoing, scarcely believed his ears.

"What whim now?" he asked. "Are you bewitched? What can you mean?"

"I am not well, and need a change," she said.

He examined her. He discovered she had *experienced*

a change, at any rate. Without his being aware of it, the rose had dwindled and faded to a mere snowdrop: bloom had vanished, flesh wasted; she sat before him drooping, colourless, and thin. But for the soft expression of her brown eyes, the delicate lines of her features, and the flowing abundance of her hair, she would no longer have possessed a claim to the epithet—pretty.

"What on earth is the matter with you?" he asked. "What is wrong? How are you ailing?"

No answer, only the brown eyes filled, the faintly-tinted lips trembled.

"Look out for a situation, indeed! For what situation are you fit? What have you been doing with yourself? You are not well."

"I should be well if I went from home."

"These women are incomprehensible. They have the strangest knack of startling you with unpleasant surprises. To-day you see them bouncing, buxom, red as cherries, and round as apples; to-morrow they exhibit themselves effete as dead weeds, blanched and broken down. And the reason of it all? that's the puzzle. She has her meals, her liberty, a good house to live in, and good clothes to wear, as usual: a while since that sufficed to keep her handsome and cheery, and there she sits now, a poor little, pale, puling chit enough. Provoking! Then comes the question, what is to be done? I suppose I must send for advice. Will you have a doctor, child?"

"No, uncle: I don't want one: a doctor could do me no good. I merely want change of air and scene."

"Well, if that be the caprice, it shall be gratified. You shall go to a watering-place. I don't mind the expense: Fanny shall accompany you."

"But, uncle, some day I must do something for myself; I have no fortune. I had better begin now."

"While I live, you shall not turn out as a governess, Caroline. I will not have it said that my niece is a governess."

"But the later in life one makes a change of that sort, uncle, the more difficult and painful it is. I should wish to get accustomed to the yoke before any habits of ease and independence are formed."

"I beg you will not harass me, Caroline. I mean to provide for you. I have always meant to provide for you: I will purchase an annuity. Bless me; I am but fifty-five; my health and constitution are excellent: there is plenty of time to save and take measures. Don't make yourself anxious respecting the future: is that what frets you?"

"No, uncle; but I long for a change."

He laughed. "There speaks the woman!" cried he, "the very woman! A change! a change! Always fantastical and whimsical? Well, it's in her sex."

"But it is not fantasy and whim, uncle."

"What is it then?"

"Necessity, I think. I feel weaker than formerly; I believe I should have more to do."

"Admirable! She feels weak, and *therefore* she should be set to hard labour—'clair comme le jour'—as Moore—confound Moore! You shall go to Cliff Bridge; and there are two guineas to buy a new frock. Come, Cary, never fear: we'll find balm in Gilead."

"Uncle, I wish you were less generous, and more"—

"More what?"

Sympathising was the word on Caroline's lips, but it was not uttered: she checked herself in time: her uncle would indeed have laughed if that namby-pamby word had escaped her. Finding her silent, he said—"The fact is, you don't know precisely what you want."

"Only to be a governess."

"Pooh! mere nonsense! I'll not hear of governessing. Don't mention it again. It is rather too feminine a fancy. I have finished breakfast, ring the bell: put all crotchets out of your head, and run away and amuse yourself."

"What with? My doll?" asked Caroline to herself as she quitted the room.

A week or two passed; her bodily and mental health neither grew worse nor better. She was now precisely in that state, when, if her constitution had contained the seeds of consumption, decline, or slow fever, those diseases would have been rapidly developed, and would soon have carried her quietly from the world. People never die of love or grief alone; though some die of inherent maladies, which the tortures of those passions prematurely force into destructive action. The sound by nature undergo these tortures, and are racked, shaken, shattered: their beauty and bloom perish, but life remains untouched. They are brought to a certain point of dilapidation; they are reduced to pallor, debility, and emaciation. People think, as they see them gliding languidly about, that they will soon withdraw to sick-beds, perish there, and cease from among the healthy and happy. This does not happen: they live on; and though they cannot regain youth and gaiety, they may regain strength and serenity. The blossom which the March wind nips, but fails to sweep away, may survive to hang a withered apple on the tree late into autumn: having braved the last frosts of spring, it may also brave the first of winter.

Every one noticed the change in Miss Helstone's appearance, and most people said she was going to die. She never thought so herself: she felt in no dying case; she had neither pain nor sickness. Her appetite was diminished; she knew the reason: it was because she

wept so much at night. Her strength was lessened; she could account for it; sleep was coy and hard to be won; dreams were distressing and baleful. In the far future she still seemed to anticipate a time when this passage of misery should be got over, and when she should once more be calm, though perhaps never again happy.

Meanwhile her uncle urged her to visit; to comply with the frequent invitations of their acquaintance: this she evaded doing; she could not be cheerful in company: she felt she was observed there with more curiosity than sympathy. Old ladies were always offering her their advice, recommending this or that nostrum; young ladies looked at her in a way she understood, and from which she shrank. Their eyes said they knew she had been "disappointed," as custom phrases it: by whom, they were not certain.

Commonplace young ladies can be quite as hard as commonplace young gentlemen—quite as worldly and selfish. Those who suffer should always avoid them; grief and calamity they despise: they seem to regard them as the judgments of God on the lowly. With them, to "love" is merely to contrive a scheme for achieving a good match: to be "disappointed" is to have their scheme seen through and frustrated. They think the feelings and projects of others on the subject of love similar to their own, and judge them accordingly.

All this Caroline knew, partly by instinct, partly by observation: she regulated her conduct by her knowledge, keeping her pale face and wasted figure as much out of sight as she could. Living thus in complete seclusion, she ceased to receive intelligence of the little transactions of the neighbourhood.

One morning her uncle came into the parlour, where she sat endeavouring to find some pleasure in painting a little group of wild flowers, gathered under a hedge at

the top of the Hollow fields, and said to her in his abrupt manner—"Come, child, you are always stooping over palette, or book, or sampler: leave that tinting work. By-the-bye, do you put your pencil to your lips when you paint?"

"Sometimes, uncle, when I forget."

"Then it is that which is poisoning you. The paints are deleterious, child: there is white lead and red lead, and verdigris, and gamboge, and twenty other poisons in those colour cakes. Lock them up! lock them up! Get your bonnet on. I want you to make a call with me."

"With *you*, uncle?"

This question was asked in a tone of surprise. She was not accustomed to make calls with her uncle: she never rode or walked out with him on any occasion.

"Quick! quick! I am always busy, you know: I have no time to lose."

She hurriedly gathered up her materials, asking, meantime, where they were going.

"To Fieldhead."

"Fieldhead! What, to see old James Booth, the gardener? Is he ill?"

"We are going to see Miss Shirley Keeldar."

"Miss Keeldar! Is she come to Yorkshire? Is she at Fieldhead?"

"She is. She has been there a week. I met her at a party last night;—that party to which you would not go. I was pleased with her: I choose that you shall make her acquaintance: it will do you good."

"She is now come of age, I suppose?"

"She is come of age, and will reside for a time on her property. I lectured her on the subject: I showed her her duty: she is not intractable; she is rather a fine girl; she will teach you what it is to have a sprightly spirit: nothing lackadaisical about *her*."

"I don't think she will want to see me, or to have me introduced to her. What good can I do her? How can I amuse her?"

"Pshaw! Put your bonnet on."

"Is she proud, uncle?"

"Don't know. You hardly imagine she would show her pride to me, I suppose? A chit like that would scarcely presume to give herself airs with the Rector of her parish, however rich she might be."

"No—but how did she behave to other people?"

"Didn't observe. She holds her head high, and probably can be saucy enough where she dare—she wouldn't be a woman otherwise. There,—away now for your bonnet at once!"

Not naturally very confident, a failure of physical strength and a depression of spirits had not tended to increase Caroline's presence of mind and ease of manner, or to give her additional courage to face strangers, and she quailed, in spite of self-remonstrance, as she and her uncle walked up the broad, paved approach leading from the gateway of Fieldhead to its porch. She followed Mr Helstone reluctantly through that porch into the sombre old vestibule beyond.

Very sombre it was; long, vast, and dark: one latticed window lit it but dimly; the wide old chimney contained now no fire, for the present warm weather needed it not; it was filled instead with willow-boughs. The gallery on high, opposite the entrance, was seen but in outline, so shadowy became this hall towards its ceiling; carved stags' heads, with real antlers, looked down grotesquely from the walls. This was neither a grand nor a comfortable house: within as without it was antique, rambling, and incommodious. A property of a thousand a year belonged to it; which property had descended, for lack of male heirs, on a female. There were mercantile families in the district boasting twice

the income, but the Keeldars, by virtue of their antiquity, and their distinction of lords of the manor, took the precedence of all.

Mr and Miss Helstone were ushered into a parlour: of course, as was to be expected in such a Gothic old barrack, this parlour was lined with oak: fine dark, glossy panels compassed the walls gloomily and grandly. Very handsome, reader, these shining brown panels are: very mellow in colouring and tasteful in effect, but—if you know what a "Spring-clean" is—very execrable and inhuman. Whoever, having the bowels of humanity, has seen servants scrubbing at these polished wooden walls with bees-waxed cloths on a warm May day, must allow that they are "intolerable and not to be endured;" and I cannot but secretly applaud the benevolent barbarian who had painted another and larger apartment of Fieldhead—the drawing-room to wit, formerly also an oak-room—of a delicate pinky white; thereby earning for himself the character of a Hun, but mightily enhancing the cheerfulness of that portion of his abode, and saving future housemaids a world of toil.

The brown-panelled parlour was furnished all in old style, and with real old furniture. On each side of the high mantelpiece stood two antique chairs of oak, solid as sylvan thrones, and in one of these sat a lady. But if this were Miss Keeldar, she must have come of age at least some twenty years ago: she was of matronly form, and though she wore no cap, and possessed hair of quite an undimmed auburn, shading small and naturally young-looking features, she had no youthful aspect, nor apparently the wish to assume it. You could have wished her attire of a newer fashion: in a well-cut, well-made gown, hers would have been no uncomely presence. It puzzled you to guess why a garment of handsome materials should be arranged in such scanty folds, and devised after such an obsolete mode: you felt

disposed to set down the wearer as somewhat eccentric at once.

This lady received the visitors with a mixture of ceremony and diffidence quite English: no middle-aged matron who was not an Englishwoman *could* evince precisely the same manner; a manner so uncertain of herself, of her own merits, of her power to please; and yet so anxious to be proper, and if possible, rather agreeable than otherwise. In the present instance, however, more embarrassment was shown than is usual even with diffident Englishwomen: Miss Helstone felt this, sympathised with the stranger, and knowing by experience what was good for the timid, took a seat quietly near her, and began to talk to her with a gentle ease, communicated for the moment by the presence of one less self-possessed than herself.

She and this lady would, if alone, have at once got on extremely well together. The lady had the clearest voice imaginable: infinitely softer and more tuneful than could have been reasonably expected from forty years, and a form decidedly inclined to embonpoint. This voice Caroline liked: it atoned for the formal, if correct, accent and language: the lady would soon have discovered she liked it and her, and in ten minutes they would have been friends. But Mr Helstone stood on the rug looking at them both; looking especially at the strange lady with his sarcastic, keen eye, that clearly expressed impatience of her chilly ceremony, and annoyance at her want of aplomb. His hard gaze and rasping voice discomfited the lady more and more; she tried, however, to get up little speeches about the weather, the aspect of the country, &c., but the impracticable Mr Helstone presently found himself somewhat deaf: whatever she said, he affected not to hear distinctly, and she was obliged to go over each elaborately constructed nothing twice. The effort soon became too much for

her; she was just rising in a perplexed flutter, nervously murmuring that she knew not what detained Miss Keeldar—that she would go and look for her, when Miss Keeldar saved her the trouble by appearing: it was to be presumed at least that she who now came in through a glass-door from the garden owned that name.

There is real grace in ease of manner, and so old Helstone felt when an erect, slight girl walked up to him, retaining with her left hand her little silk apron full of flowers, and, giving him her right hand, said pleasantly—"I knew you would come to see me, though you *do* think Mr Yorke has made me a Jacobin. Good-morning."

"But we'll not have you a Jacobin," returned he. "No, Miss Shirley, they shall not steal the flower of my parish from me: now that you are amongst us, you shall be my pupil in politics and religion: I'll teach you sound doctrine on both points."

"Mrs Pryor has anticipated you," she replied, turning to the elder lady. "Mrs Pryor, you know, was my governess, and is still my friend; and of all the high and rigid Tories, she is queen; of all the stanch churchwomen, she is chief. I have been well drilled both in theology and history, I assure you, Mr Helstone."

The Rector immediately bowed very low to Mrs Pryor, and expressed himself obliged to her.

The ex-governess disclaimed skill either in political or religious controversy, explained that she thought such matters little adapted for female minds, but avowed herself in general terms the advocate of order and loyalty, and, of course, truly attached to the Establishment. She added, she was ever averse to change under any circumstances; and something scarcely audible about the extreme danger of being too ready to take up new ideas, closed her sentence.

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Caroline's introduction to Shirley.

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"Miss Keeldar thinks as you think, I hope, madam."

"Difference of age and difference of temperament occasion difference of sentiment," was the reply. "It can scarcely be expected that the eager and young should hold the opinions of the cool and middle-aged."

"Oh! oh! we are independent: we think for ourselves!" cried Mr Helstone. "We are a little Jacobin, for anything I know: a little free-thinker, in good earnest. Let us have a confession of faith on the spot."

And he took the heiress's two hands—causing her to let fall her whole cargo of flowers—and seated her by him on the sofa.

"Say your creed," he ordered.

"The Apostle's creed?"

"Yes."

She said it like a child.

"Now for St Athanasius's: that's the test!"

"Let me gather up my flowers: here is Tartar coming, he will tread upon them."

Tartar was a rather large, strong, and fierce-looking dog, very ugly, being of a breed between mastiff and bull-dog, who at this moment entered through the glass door, and posting directly to the rug, snuffed the fresh flowers scattered there. He seemed to scorn them as food; but probably thinking their velvety petals might be convenient as litter, he was turning round preparatory to depositing his tawny bulk upon them, when Miss Helstone and Miss Keeldar simultaneously stooped to the rescue.

"Thank you," said the heiress, as she again held out her little apron for Caroline to heap the blossoms into it. "Is this your daughter, Mr Helstone?" she asked.

"My niece, Caroline."

Miss Keeldar shook hands with her, and then looked at her. Caroline also looked at her hostess.

Shirley Keeldar (she had no Christian name but Shirley: her parents, who had wished to have a son, finding that, after eight years of marriage, Providence had granted them only a daughter, bestowed on her the same masculine family cognomen they would have bestowed on a boy, if with a boy they had been blessed)—Shirley Keeldar was no ugly heiress: she was agreeable to the eye. Her height and shape were not unlike Miss Helstone's: perhaps in stature she might have the advantage by an inch or two; she was gracefully made, and her face, too, possessed a charm as well described by the word grace as any other. It was pale naturally, but intelligent, and of varied expression. She was not a blonde, like Caroline: clear and dark were the characteristics of her aspect as to colour: her face and brow were clear, her eyes of the darkest grey: no green lights in them,—transparent, pure, neutral grey: and her hair of the darkest brown. Her features were distinguished: by which I do not mean that they were high, bony, and Roman, being indeed rather small and slightly marked than otherwise; but only that they were, to use a few French words, "fins, gracieux, spirituels:" mobile they were and speaking; but their changes were not to be understood, nor their language interpreted all at once. She examined Caroline seriously, inclining her head a little to one side, with a thoughtful air.

"You see she is only a feeble chick," observed Mr Helstone.

"She looks young—younger than I. How old are you?" she inquired, in a manner that would have been patronising if it had not been extremely solemn and simple.

"Eighteen years and six months."

"And I am twenty-one."

She said no more; she had now placed her flowers on the table, and was busied in arranging them.

"And St Athanasius's creed?" urged the Rector; "you believe it all—don't you?"

"I can't remember it quite all. I will give you a nosegay, Mr Helstone, when I have given your niece one."

She had selected a little bouquet of one brilliant and two or three delicate flowers, relieved by a spray of dark verdure: she tied it with silk from her work-box, and placed it on Caroline's lap; and then she put her hands behind her, and stood bending slightly towards her guest, still regarding her, in the attitude and with something of the aspect of a grave but gallant little cavalier. This temporary expression of face was aided by the style in which she wore her hair, parted on one temple, and brushed in a glossy sweep above the forehead, whence it fell in curls that looked natural, so free were their wavy undulations.

"Are you tired with your walk?" she inquired.

"No—not in the least; it is but a short distance—but a mile."

"You look pale. Is she always so pale?" she asked, turning to the Rector.

"She used to be as rosy as the reddest of your flowers."

"Why is she altered? What has made her pale? Has she been ill?"

"She tells me she wants a change."

"She ought to have one: you ought to give her one: you should send her to the sea-coast."

"I will, ere summer is over. Meantime, I intend her to make acquaintance with you, if you have no objection."

"I am sure Miss Keeldar will have no objection,"

here observed Mrs Pryor. "I think I may take it upon me to say that Miss Helstone's frequent presence at Fieldhead will be esteemed a favour."

"You speak my sentiments precisely, ma'am," said Shirley, "and I thank you for anticipating me. Let me tell you," she continued, turning again to Caroline, "that you also ought to thank my governess; it is not every one she would welcome as she has welcomed you: you are distinguished more than you think. This morning, as soon as you are gone, I shall ask Mrs Pryor's opinion of you. I am apt to rely on her judgment of character, for hitherto I have found it wondrous accurate. Already I foresee a favourable answer to my inquiries: do I not guess rightly, Mrs Pryor?"

"My dear—you said but now you would ask my opinion when Miss Helstone was gone; I am scarcely likely to give it in her presence."

"No—and perhaps it will be long enough before I obtain it. I am sometimes sadly tantalised, Mr Helstone, by Mrs Pryor's extreme caution: her judgments ought to be correct when they come, for they are often as tardy of delivery as a Lord Chancellor's: on some people's characters I cannot get her to pronounce sentence, entreat as I may."

Mrs Pryor here smiled.

"Yes," said her pupil, "I know what that smile means: you are thinking of my gentleman-tenant. Do you know Mr Moore of the Hollow?" she asked Mr Helstone.

"Ay! ay! your tenant—so he is: you have seen a good deal of him, no doubt, since you came?"

"I have been obliged to see him: there was business to transact. Business! Really the word makes me conscious I am indeed no longer a girl, but quite a woman and something more. I am an esquire! Shirley Keeldar, Esquire, ought to be my style and

title. They gave me a man's name; I hold a man's position: it is enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood, and when I see such people as that stately Anglo-Belgian—that Gérard Moore before me, gravely talking to me of business, really I feel quite gentleman-like. You must choose me for your churchwarden, Mr Helstone, the next time you elect new ones: they ought to make me a magistrate and a captain of yeomanry: Tony Lumpkin's mother was a colonel, and his aunt a justice of the peace—why shouldn't I be?"

"With all my heart. If you choose to get up a requisition on the subject, I promise to head the list of signatures with my name. But you were speaking of Moore?"

"Ah! yes. I find it a little difficult to understand Mr Moore—to know what to think of him: whether to like him or not. He seems a tenant of whom any proprietor might be proud—and proud of him I am, in that sense—but as a neighbour, what is he? Again and again I have entreated Mrs Pryor to say what she thinks of him, but she still evades returning a direct answer. I hope you will be less oracular, Mr Helstone, and pronounce at once: do you like him?"

"Not at all, just now: his name is entirely blotted from my good books."

"What is the matter? What has he done?"

"My uncle and he disagree on politics," interposed the low voice of Caroline. She had better not have spoken just then: having scarcely joined in the conversation before, it was not apropos to do it now: she felt this with nervous acuteness as soon as she had spoken, and coloured to the eyes.

"What are Moore's politics?" inquired Shirley.

"Those of a tradesman," returned the Rector; "narrow, selfish, and unpatriotic. The man is eternally

writing and speaking against the continuance of the war: I have no patience with him."

"The war hurts his trade. I remember he remarked that only yesterday. But what other objection have you to him?"

"That is enough."

"He looks the gentleman, in my sense of the term," pursued Shirley, "and it pleases me to think he is such."

Caroline rent the Tyrian petals of the one brilliant flower in her bouquet, and answered in distinct tones—"Decidedly he is." Shirley, hearing this courageous affirmation, flashed an arch, searching glance at the speaker from her deep, expressive eyes.

"*You* are his friend, at any rate," she said; "you defend him in his absence."

"I am both his friend and his relative," was the prompt reply. "Robert Moore is my cousin."

"Oh, then, you can tell me all about him. Just give me a sketch of his character."

Insuperable embarrassment seized Caroline when this demand was made: she could not, and did not attempt to comply with it. Her silence was immediately covered by Mrs Pryor, who proceeded to address sundry questions to Mr Helstone regarding a family or two in the neighbourhood, with whose connections in the south she said she was acquainted. Shirley soon withdrew her gaze from Miss Helstone's face. She did not renew her interrogations, but returning to her flowers, proceeded to choose a nosegay for the Rector. She presented it to him as he took leave, and received the homage of a salute on the hand in return.

"Be sure you wear it for my sake," said she.

"Next my heart, of course," responded Helstone. "Mrs Pryor, take care of this future magistrate, this churchwarden in perspective, this captain of yeomanry,

this young squire of Briarfield, in a word: don't let him exert himself too much: don't let him break his neck in hunting: especially, let him mind how he rides down that dangerous hill near the Hollow."

"I like a descent," said Shirley—"I like to clear it rapidly; and especially I like that romantic Hollow, with all my heart."

"Romantic—with a mill in it?"

"Romantic with a mill in it. The old mill and the white cottage are each admirable in its way."

"And the counting-house, Mr Keeldar?"

"The counting-house is better than my bloom-coloured drawing-room: I adore the counting-house."

"And the trade? The cloth—the greasy wool—the polluting dyeing-vats?"

"The trade is to be thoroughly respected."

"And the tradesman is a hero? Good!"

"I am glad to hear you say so: I thought the tradesman looked heroic."

Mischief, spirit, and glee sparkled all over her face as she thus bandied words with the old Cossack, who almost equally enjoyed the tilt.

"Captain Keeldar, you have no mercantile blood in your veins: why are you so fond of trade?"

"Because I am a mill-owner, of course. Half my income comes from the works in that Hollow."

"Don't enter into partnership, that's all."

"You've put it into my head! you've put it into my head!" she exclaimed, with a joyous laugh. "It will never get out: thank you." And waving her hand, white as a lily and fine as a fairy's, she vanished within the porch, while the Rector and his niece passed out through the arched gateway.

Chapter xij.

SHIRLEY AND CAROLINE.

SHIRLEY showed she had been sincere in saying she should be glad of Caroline's society, by frequently seeking it: and, indeed, if she had not sought it, she would not have had it; for Miss Helstone was slow to make fresh acquaintance. She was always held back by the idea that people could not want her,—that she could not amuse them; and a brilliant, happy, youthful creature, like the heiress of Fieldhead, seemed to her too completely independent of society so uninteresting as hers, ever to find it really welcome.

Shirley might be brilliant, and probably happy likewise, but no one is independent of genial society; and though in about a month she had made the acquaintance of most of the families round, and was on quite free and easy terms with all the Misses Sykes, and all the Misses Pearson, and the two superlative Misses Wynne of Walden Hall; yet, it appeared, she found none amongst them very genial: she fraternised with none of them, to use her own words. If she had had the bliss to be really Shirley Keeldar, Esq., Lord of the Manor of Briarfield, there was not a single fair one in this and the two neighbouring parishes, whom she should have felt disposed to request to become Mrs Keeldar, lady of the manor. This declaration she made to Mrs Pryor, who received it very quietly, as she did most of her pupil's off-hand speeches, responding—"My dear, do not allow that habit of alluding to yourself as a gentleman to be confirmed: it is a strange one. Those who do not know you, hearing you speak thus, would think you affected masculine manners."

Shirley never laughed at her former governess: even the little formalities and harmless peculiarities of that

lady were respectable in her eyes: had it been otherwise, she would have proved herself a weak character at once: for it is only the weak who make a butt of quiet worth; therefore she took her remonstrance in silence. She stood quietly near the window, looking at the grand cedar on her lawn, watching a bird on one of its lower boughs. Presently she began to chirrup to the bird: soon her chirrup grew clearer; erelong she was whistling; the whistle struck into a tune, and very sweetly and deftly it was executed.

"My dear!" expostulated Mrs Pryor.

"Was I whistling?" said Shirley; "I forgot. I beg your pardon, ma'am. I had resolved to take care not to whistle before you."

"But, Miss Keeldar, where did you learn to whistle? You must have got the habit since you came down into Yorkshire. I never knew you guilty of it before."

"Oh! I learned to whistle a long while ago."

"Who taught you?"

"No one: I took it up by listening, and I had laid it down again; but lately, yesterday evening, as I was coming up our lane, I heard a gentleman whistling that very tune in the field on the other side of the hedge, and that reminded me."

"What gentleman was it?"

"We have only one gentleman in this region, ma'am, and that is Mr Moore: at least he is the only gentleman who is not grey-haired: my two venerable favourites, Mr Helstone and Mr Yorke, it is true, are fine old beaux; infinitely better than any of the stupid young ones."

Mrs Pryor was silent.

"You do not like Mr Helstone, ma'am?"

"My dear, Mr Helstone's office secures him from criticism."

"You generally contrive to leave the room when he is announced."

"Do you walk out this morning, my dear?"

"Yes, I shall go to the Rectory, and seek and find Caroline Helstone, and make her take some exercise: she shall have a breezy walk over Nunnely Common."

"If you go in that direction, my dear, have the goodness to remind Miss Helstone to wrap up well, as there is a fresh wind, and she appears to me to require care."

"You shall be minutely obeyed, Mrs Pryor: meantime, will you not accompany us yourself?"

"No, my love; I should be a restraint upon you: I am stout, and cannot walk so quickly as you would wish to do."

Shirley easily persuaded Caroline to go with her: and when they were fairly out on the quiet road, traversing the extensive and solitary sweep of Nunnely Common, she as easily drew her into conversation. The first feelings of diffidence overcome, Caroline soon felt glad to talk with Miss Keeldar. The very first interchange of slight observations sufficed to give each an idea of what the other was. Shirley said she liked the green sweep of the common turf, and, better still, the heath on its ridges, for the heath reminded her of moors: she had seen moors when she was travelling on the borders near Scotland. She remembered particularly a district traversed one long afternoon, on a sultry but sunless day in summer: they journeyed from noon till sunset, over what seemed a boundless waste of deep heath, and nothing had they seen but wild sheep; nothing heard but the cries of wild birds.

"I know how the heath would look on such a day," said Caroline; "purple-black: a deeper shade of the sky-tint, and that would be livid."

"Yes—quite livid, with brassy edges to the clouds, and here and there a white gleam, more ghastly than the

lurid tinge, which, as you looked at it, you momentarily expected would kindle into blinding lightning."

"Did it thunder?"

"It muttered distant peals, but the storm did not break till evening, after we had reached our inn: that inn being an isolated house at the foot of a range of mountains."

"Did you watch the clouds come down over the mountains?"

"I did: I stood at the window an hour watching them. The hills seemed rolled in a sullen mist, and when the rain fell in whitening sheets, suddenly they were blotted from the prospect: they were washed from the world."

"I have seen such storms in hilly districts in Yorkshire; and at their riotous climax, while the sky was all cataract, the earth all flood, I have remembered the Deluge."

"It is singularly reviving after such hurricanes to feel calm return, and from the opening clouds to receive a consolatory gleam, softly testifying that the sun is not quenched."

"Miss Keeldar, just stand still now, and look down at Nunnely dale and wood."

They both halted on the green brow of the Common: they looked down on the deep valley robed in May raiment; on varied meads, some pearled with daisies, and some golden with king-cups: to-day all this young verdure smiled clear in sunlight; transparent emerald and amber gleams played over it. On Nunnwood—the sole remnant of antique British forest in a region whose lowlands were once all sylvan chase, as its highlands were breast-deep heather—slept the shadow of a cloud; the distant hills were dappled, the horizon was shaded and tinted like mother-of-pearl; silvery blues, soft purples, evanescent greens and rose-shades, all melting

into fleeces of white cloud, pure as azury snow, allured the eye as with a remote glimpse of heaven's foundations. The air blowing on the brow was fresh, and sweet, and bracing.

"Our England is a bonnie island," said Shirley, "and Yorkshire is one of her bonniest nooks."

"You are a Yorkshire girl too?"

"I am—Yorkshire in blood and birth. Five generations of my race sleep under the aisles of Briarfield Church: I drew my first breath in the old black hall behind us."

Hereupon Caroline presented her hand, which was accordingly taken and shaken. "We are compatriots," said she.

"Yes," agreed Shirley, with a grave nod.

"And that," asked Miss Keeldar, pointing to the forest—"that is Nunnwood?"

"It is."

"Were you ever there?"

"Many a time."

"In the heart of it?'

"Yes."

"What is it like?"

"It is like an encampment of forest sons of Anak. The trees are huge and old. When you stand at their roots, the summits seem in another region: the trunks remain still and firm as pillars, while the boughs sway to every breeze. In the deepest calm their leaves are never quite hushed, and in high wind a flood rushes—a sea thunders above you."

"Was it not one of Robin Hood's haunts?"

"Yes, and there are mementoes of him still existing. To penetrate into Nunnwood, Miss Keeldar, is to go far back into the dim days of eld. Can you see a break in the forest, about the centre?"

"Yes, distinctly."

"That break is a dell; a deep, hollow cup, lined with turf as green and short as the sod of this common: the very oldest of the trees, gnarled mighty oaks, crowd about the brink of this dell: in the bottom lie the ruins of a nunnery."

"We will go—you and I alone, Caroline—to that wood, early some fine summer morning, and spend a long day there. We can take pencils and sketch-books, and any interesting reading-book we like; and of course we shall take something to eat. I have two little baskets, in which Mrs Gill, my housekeeper, might pack our provisions, and we could each carry our own. It would not tire you too much to walk so far?"

"Oh, no; especially if we rested the whole day in the wood, and I know all the pleasantest spots: I know where we could get nuts in nutting time; I know where wild strawberries abound: I know certain lonely, quite untrodden glades, carpeted with strange mosses, some yellow as if gilded, some a sober grey, some gem-green. I know groups of trees that ravish the eye with their perfect, picture-like effects: rude oak, delicate birch, glossy beech, clustered in contrast; and ash trees stately as Saul, standing isolated, and superannuated wood-giants clad in bright shrouds of ivy. Miss Keeldar, I could guide you."

"You would be dull with me alone?"

"I should not. I think we should suit: and what third person is there whose presence would not spoil our pleasure?"

"Indeed, I know of none about our own ages—no lady at least, and as to gentlemen"——

"An excursion becomes quite a different thing when there are gentlemen of the party," interrupted Caroline.

"I agree with you—quite a different thing to what we were proposing."

"We were going simply to see the old trees, the old

ruins; to pass a day in old times, surrounded by olden silence, and above all by quietude."

"You are right; and the presence of gentlemen dispels the last charm, I think. If they are of the wrong sort, like your Malones, and your young Sykes, and Wynnes, irritation takes the place of serenity. If they are of the right sort, there is still a change—I can hardly tell what change, one easy to feel, difficult to describe."

"We forget Nature, imprimis."

"And then Nature forgets us; covers her vast calm brow with a dim veil, conceals her face, and withdraws the peaceful joy with which, if we had been content to worship her only, she would have filled our hearts."

"What does she give us instead?"

"More elation and more anxiety: an excitement that steals the hours away fast, and a trouble that ruffles their course."

"Our power of being happy lies a good deal in ourselves, I believe," remarked Caroline sagely. "I have gone to Nunnwood with a large party, all the curates and some other gentry of these parts, together with sundry ladies; and I found the affair insufferably tedious and absurd: and I have gone quite alone, or accompanied but by Fanny, who sat in the woodman's hut and sewed, or talked to the goodwife, while I roamed about and made sketches, or read; and I have enjoyed much happiness of a quiet kind all day long. But that was when I was young—two years ago."

"Did you ever go with your cousin, Robert Moore?"

"Yes; once."

"What sort of a companion is he on these occasions?"

"A cousin, you know, is different to a stranger."

"I am aware of that; but cousins, if they are stupid,

are still more insupportable than strangers, because you cannot so easily keep them at a distance. But your cousin is not stupid?"

"No; but"——

"Well?"

"If the company of fools irritates, as you say, the society of clever men leaves its own peculiar pain also. Where the goodness or talent of your friend is beyond and above all doubt, your own worthiness to be his associate often becomes a matter of question."

"Oh! there I cannot follow you: that crotchet is not one I should choose to entertain for an instant. I consider myself not unworthy to be the associate of the best of them—of gentlemen, I mean: though that is saying a great deal. Where they are good, they are very good, I believe. Your uncle, by-the-bye, is not a bad specimen of the elderly gentleman: I am always glad to see his brown, keen, sensible old face, either in my own house or any other. Are you fond of him? Is he kind to you? Now speak the truth."

"He has brought me up from childhood, I doubt not, precisely as he would have brought up his own daughter, if he had had one; and that is kindness; but I am not fond of him: I would rather be out of his presence than in it."

"Strange! when he has the art of making himself so agreeable."

"Yes, in company; but he is stern and silent at home. As he puts away his cane and shovel-hat in the Rectory-hall, so he locks his liveliness in his book-case and study-desk: the knitted brow and brief word for the fire-side; the smile, the jest, the witty sally, for society."

"Is he tyrannical?"

"Not in the least: he is neither tyrannical nor hypocritical: he is simply a man who is rather liberal

than good-natured, rather brilliant than genial, rather scrupulously equitable than truly just,—if you can understand such superfine distinctions?"

"Oh! yes: good-nature implies indulgence, which he has not; geniality, warmth of heart, which he does not own; and genuine justice is the offspring of sympathy and considerateness, of which, I can well conceive, my bronzed old friend is quite innocent."

"I often wonder, Shirley, whether most men resemble my uncle in their domestic relations; whether it is necessary to be new and unfamiliar to them, in order to seem agreeable or estimable in their eyes; and whether it is impossible to their natures to retain a constant interest and affection for those they see every day."

"I don't know: I can't clear up your doubts. I ponder over similar ones myself sometimes. But, to tell you a secret, if I were convinced that they are necessarily and universally different from us—fickle, soon petrifying, unsympathising—I would never marry. I should not like to find out that what I loved did not love me, that it was weary of me, and that whatever effort I might make to please would hereafter be worse than useless, since it was inevitably in its nature to change and become indifferent. That discovery once made, what should I long for? To go away—to remove from a presence where my society gave no pleasure."

"But you could not, if you were married."

"No, I could not,—there it is. I could never be my own mistress more. A terrible thought!—it suffocates me! Nothing irks me like the idea of being a burden and a bore,—an inevitable burden,—a ceaseless bore! Now, when I feel my company superfluous, I can comfortably fold my independence round me like a mantle, and drop my pride like a veil, and withdraw to solitude. If married, that could not be."

"I wonder we don't all make up our minds to remain single," said Caroline: "we should if we listened to the wisdom of experience. My uncle always speaks of marriage as a burden; and I believe whenever he hears of a man being married, he invariably regards him as a fool, or at any rate, as doing a foolish thing."

"But, Caroline, men are not all like your uncle: surely not—I hope not."

She paused and mused.

"I suppose we each find an exception in the one we love, till we *are* married," suggested Caroline.

"I suppose so: and this exception we believe to be of sterling materials; we fancy it like ourselves; we imagine a sense of harmony. We think his voice gives the softest, truest promise of a heart that will never harden against us: we read in his eyes that faithful feeling—affection. I don't think we should trust to what they call passion at all, Caroline. I believe it is a mere fire of dry sticks, blazing up and vanishing: but we watch him, and see him kind to animals, to little children, to poor people. He is kind to us likewise—good—considerate: he does not flatter women, but he is patient with them, and he seems to be easy in their presence, and to find their company genial. He likes them not only for vain and selfish reasons, but as *we* like him—because we like him. Then we observe that he is just—that he always speaks the truth—that he is conscientious. We feel joy and peace when he comes into a room: we feel sadness and trouble when he leaves it. We know that this man has been a kind son, that he is a kind brother: will any one dare to tell me that he will not be a kind husband?"

"My uncle would affirm it unhesitatingly. 'He will be sick of you in a month,' he would say."

"Mrs Pryor would seriously intimate the same."

"Mrs Yorke and Miss Mann would darkly suggest ditto."

"If they are true oracles, it is good never to fall in love."

"Very good, if you can avoid it."

"I choose to doubt their truth."

"I am afraid that proves you are already caught."

"Not I: but if I were, do you know what sooth-sayers I would consult?"

"Let me hear."

"Neither man nor woman, elderly nor young:—the little Irish beggar that comes barefoot to my door; the mouse that steals out of the cranny in the wainscot; the bird that in frost and snow pecks at my window for a crumb; the dog that licks my hand and sits beside my knee."

"Did you ever see any one who was kind to such things?"

"Did you ever see any one whom such things seemed instinctively to follow, like, rely on?"

"We have a black cat and an old dog at the Rectory. I know somebody to whose knee that black cat loves to climb; against whose shoulder and cheek it likes to purr. The old dog always comes out of his kennel and wags his tail, and whines affectionately when somebody passes."

"And what does that somebody do?"

"He quietly strokes the cat, and lets her sit while he conveniently can, and when he must disturb her by rising, he puts her softly down, and never flings her from him roughly; he always whistles to the dog and gives him a caress."

"Does he? It is not Robert?"

"But it is Robert."

"Handsome fellow!" said Shirley, with enthusiasm: her eyes sparkled.

"Is he not handsome? Has he not fine eyes and well-cut features, and a clear, princely forehead?"

"He has all that, Caroline. Bless him! he is both graceful and good."

"I was sure you would see that he was: when I first looked at your face I knew you would."

"I was well inclined to him before I saw him. I liked him when I did see him: I admire him now. There is charm in beauty for itself, Caroline; when it is blent with goodness, there is a powerful charm."

"When mind is added, Shirley?"

"Who can resist it?"

"Remember my uncle, Mesdames Pryor, Yorke, and Mann."

"Remember the croaking of the frogs of Egypt! He is a noble being. I tell you when they *are* good, they are the lords of the creation,—they are the sons of God. Moulded in their Maker's image, the minutest spark of His spirit lifts them almost above mortality. Indisputably, a great, good, handsome man is the first of created things."

"Above us?"

"I would scorn to contend for empire with him,—I would scorn it. Shall my left hand dispute for precedence with my right?—shall my heart quarrel with my pulse?—shall my veins be jealous of the blood which fills them?"

"Men and women, husbands and wives quarrel horribly, Shirley."

"Poor things!—poor, fallen, degenerate things! God made them for another lot—for other feelings."

"But are we men's equals, or are we not?"

"Nothing ever charms me more than when I meet my superior—one who makes me sincerely feel that he is my superior."

"Did you ever meet him?"

"I should be glad to see him any day: the higher above me, so much the better: it degrades to stoop—it is glorious to look up. What frets me is, that when I try to esteem, I am baffled: when religiously inclined, there are but false gods to adore. I disdain to be a Pagan."

"Miss Keeldar, will you come in? We are here at the Rectory gates."

"Not to-day; but to-morrow I shall fetch you to spend the evening with me. Caroline Helstone—if you really are what at present to me you seem—you and I will suit. I have never in my whole life been able to talk to a young lady as I have talked to you this morning. Kiss me—and good-bye."

Mrs Pryor seemed as well-disposed to cultivate Caroline's acquaintance as Shirley. She, who went nowhere else, called on an early day at the Rectory. She came in the afternoon, when the Rector happened to be out. It was rather a close day; the heat of the weather had flushed her, and she seemed fluttered, too, by the circumstance of entering a strange house; for it appeared her habits were most retiring and secluded. When Miss Helstone went to her in the dining-room she found her seated on the sofa, trembling, fanning herself with her handkerchief, and seeming to contend with a nervous discomposure that threatened to become hysterical.

Caroline marvelled somewhat at this unusual want of self-command in a lady of her years, and also at the lack of real strength in one who appeared almost robust: for Mrs Pryor hastened to allege the fatigue of her walk, the heat of the sun, etc., as reasons for her temporary indisposition; and still as, with more hurry than coherence, she again and again enumerated these causes of exhaustion, Caroline gently sought to relieve her by

opening her shawl and removing her bonnet. Attentions of this sort, Mrs Pryor would not have accepted from everyone: in general, she recoiled from touch or close approach, with a mixture of embarrassment and coldness far from flattering to those who offered her aid: to Miss Helstone's little light hand, however, she yielded tractably, and seemed soothed by its contact. In a few minutes she ceased to tremble, and grew quiet and tranquil.

Her usual manner being resumed, she proceeded to talk of ordinary topics. In a miscellaneous company, Mrs Pryor rarely opened her lips; or, if obliged to speak, she spoke under restraint, and consequently not well; in dialogue, she was a good converser: her language, always a little formal, was well chosen; her sentiments were just; her information was varied and correct. Caroline felt it pleasant to listen to her: more pleasant than she could have anticipated.

On the wall opposite the sofa where they sat, hung three pictures: the centre one, above the mantelpiece, that of a lady; the two others, male portraits.

"That is a beautiful face," said Mrs Pryor, interrupting a brief pause which had followed half-an-hour's animated conversation: "the features may be termed perfect; no statuary's chisel could improve them: it is a portrait from the life, I presume?"

"It is a portrait of Mrs Helstone."

"Of Mrs Matthewson Helstone? Of your uncle's wife?"

"It is, and is said to be a good likeness: before her marriage, she was accounted the beauty of the district."

"I should say she merited the distinction: what accuracy in all the lineaments! It is, however, a passive face: the original could not have been what is generally termed, 'a woman of spirit.'"

"I believe she was a remarkably still, silent person."

"One would scarcely have expected, my dear, that your uncle's choice should have fallen on a partner of that description. Is he not fond of being amused by lively chat?"

"In company he is; but he always says he could never do with a talking wife: he must have quiet at home. You go out to gossip, he affirms; you come home to read and reflect."

"Mrs Matthewson lived but a few years after her marriage, I think I have heard?"

"About five years."

"Well, my dear," pursued Mrs Pryor, rising to go, "I trust it is understood that you will frequently come to Fieldhead: I hope you will. You must feel lonely here, having no female relative in the house: you must necessarily pass much of your time in solitude."

"I am inured to it: I have grown up by myself. May I arrange your shawl for you?"

Mrs Pryor submitted to be assisted.

"Should you chance to require help in your studies," she said, "you may command me."

Caroline expressed her sense of such kindness.

"I hope to have frequent conversations with you. I should wish to be of use to you."

Again Miss Helstone returned thanks. She thought what a kind heart was hidden under her visitor's seeming chilliness. Observing that Mrs Pryor again glanced with an air of interest towards the portraits, as she walked down the room, Caroline casually explained —"The likeness that hangs near the window, you will see, is my uncle, taken twenty years ago; the other, to the left of the mantelpiece, is his brother James, my father."

"They resemble each other in some measure," said Mrs Pryor; "yet a difference of character may be traced in the different mould of the brow and mouth."

"What difference?" inquired Caroline, accompanying her to the door. "James Helstone—that is, my father—is generally considered the best-looking of the two: strangers, I remark, always exclaim, 'What a handsome man!' Do you think his picture handsome, Mrs Pryor?"

"It is much softer or finer featured than that of your uncle."

"But where or what is the difference of character to which you alluded? Tell me: I wish to see if you guess right."

"My dear, your uncle is a man of principle: his forehead and his lips are firm, and his eye is steady."

"Well, and the other? Do not be afraid of offending me: I always like the truth."

"Do you like the truth? It is well for you: adhere to that preference—never swerve thence. The other, my dear, if he had been living now, would probably have furnished little support to his daughter. It is, however, a graceful head—taken in youth, I should think. My dear" (turning abruptly), "you acknowledge an inestimate value in principle?"

"I am sure no character can have true worth without it."

"You feel what you say? You have considered the subject?"

"Often. Circumstances early forced it upon my attention."

"The lesson was not lost, then, though it came so prematurely. I suppose the soil is not light nor stony, otherwise seed falling in that season never would have borne fruit. My dear, do not stand in the air of the door, you will take cold: good afternoon."

Miss Helstone's new acquaintance soon became of value to her: their society was acknowledged a privilege. She found she would have been in error

indeed to have let slip this chance of relief—to have neglected to avail herself of this happy change: a turn was thereby given to her thoughts; a new channel was opened for them, which, diverting a few of them at least from the one direction in which all had hitherto tended, abated the impetuosity of their rush, and lessened the force of their pressure on one worn-down point.

Soon she was content to spend whole days at Fieldhead, doing by turns whatever Shirley or Mrs Pryor wished her to do: and now one would claim her, now the other. Nothing could be less demonstrative than the friendship of the elder lady; but also nothing could be more vigilant, assiduous, untiring. I have intimated that she was a peculiar personage; and in nothing was her peculiarity more shown than in the nature of the interest she evinced for Caroline. She watched all her movements: she seemed as if she would have guarded all her steps: it gave her pleasure to be applied to by Miss Helstone for advice and assistance; she yielded her aid, when asked, with such quiet yet obvious enjoyment, that Caroline ere long took delight in depending on her.

Shirley Keeldar's complete docility with Mrs Pryor had at first surprised Miss Helstone, and not less the fact of the reserved ex-governess being so much at home and at ease in the residence of her young pupil, where she filled with such quiet independency a very dependent post; but she soon found that it needed but to know both ladies to comprehend fully the enigma. Every one, it seemed to her, must like, must love, must prize Mrs Pryor when they knew her. No matter that she perseveringly wore old-fashioned gowns; that her speech was formal, and her manner cool; that she had twenty little ways such as nobody else had—she was still such a stay, such a counsellor, so truthful, so kind in her

way, that, in Caroline's idea, none once accustomed to her presence could easily afford to dispense with it.

As to dependency or humiliation, Caroline did not feel it in her intercourse with Shirley, and why should Mrs Pryor? The heiress was rich—very rich—compared with her new friend: one possessed a clear thousand a year—the other not a penny; and yet there was a safe sense of equality experienced in her society, never known in that of the ordinary Briarfield and Whinbury gentry.

The reason was, Shirley's head ran on other things than money and position. She was glad to be independent as to property: by fits she was even elated at the notion of being lady of the manor, and having tenants and an estate: she was especially tickled with an agreeable complacency when reminded of "all that property" down in the Hollow, "comprising an excellent cloth-mill, dyehouse, warehouse, together with the messuage, gardens, and outbuildings, termed Hollow's Cottage;" but her exultation being quite undisguised was singularly inoffensive; and, for her serious thoughts, they tended elsewhere. To admire the great, reverence the good, and be joyous with the genial, was very much the bent of Shirley's soul: she mused therefore on the means of following this bent far oftener than she pondered on her social superiority.

In Caroline, Miss Keeldar had first taken an interest because she was quiet, retiring, looked delicate, and seemed as if she needed some one to take care of her. Her predilection increased greatly when she discovered that her own way of thinking and talking was understood and responded to by this new acquaintance. She had hardly expected it. Miss Helstone, she fancied, had too pretty a face, manners and voice too soft, to be anything out of the common way in mind and attainments; and she very much wondered to see the gentle

features light up archly to the reveillé of a dry sally or two risked by herself; and more did she wonder to discover the self-won knowledge treasured, and the untaught speculations working in that girlish, curl-veiled head. Caroline's instinct of taste, too, was like her own: such books as Miss Keeldar had read with the most pleasure, were Miss Helstone's delight also. They held many aversions too in common, and could have the comfort of laughing together over works of false sentimentality and pompous pretension.

Few, Shirley conceived, men or women have the right taste in poetry: the right sense for discriminating between what is real and what is false. She had again and again heard very clever people pronounce this or that passage, in this or that versifier, altogether admirable, which, when she read, her soul refused to acknowledge as anything but cant, flourish, and tinsel, or at the best, elaborate wordiness; curious, clever, learned perhaps; haply even tinged with the fascinating hues of fancy, but, God knows, as different from real poetry as the gorgeous and massy vase of mosaic is from the little cup of pure metal; or, to give the reader a choice of similes, as the milliner's artificial wreath is from the fresh-gathered lily of the field.

Caroline, she found, felt the value of the true ore, and knew the deception of the flashy dross. The minds of the two girls being toned in harmony, often chimed very sweetly together.

One evening, they chanced to be alone in the oak-parlour. They had passed a long wet day together without ennui; it was now on the edge of dark; candles were not yet brought in; both, as twilight deepened, grew meditative and silent. A western wind roared high round the hall, driving wild clouds and stormy rain up from the far-remote ocean: all was tempest outside the antique lattices, all deep peace within.

Shirley sat at the window, watching the rack in heaven, the mist on earth, listening to certain notes of the gale that plained like restless spirits—notes which, had she not been so young, gay, and healthy, would have swept her trembling nerves like some omen, some anticipatory dirge: in this her prime of existence and bloom of beauty, they but subdued vivacity to pensiveness. Snatches of sweet ballads haunted her ear; now and then she sang a stanza: her accents obeyed the fitful impulse of the wind; they swelled as its gusts rushed on, and died as they wandered away. Caroline, withdrawn to the farthest and darkest end of the room, her figure just discernible by the ruby shine of the flameless fire, was pacing to and fro, murmuring to herself fragments of well-remembered poetry. She spoke very low, but Shirley heard her; and while singing softly, she listened. This was the strain:—

"Obscurest night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left."

Here the fragment stopped; because Shirley's song, erewhile somewhat full and thrilling, had become delicately faint.

"Go on," said she.

"Then you go on, too. I was only repeating 'The Castaway.'"

"I know: if you can remember it all, say it all."

And as it was nearly dark, and, after all, Miss Keeldar was no formidable auditor, Caroline went through it. She went through it as she should have gone through it. The wild sea, the drowning mariner, the reluctant ship swept on in the storm, you heard were realised by her; and more vividly was realised the heart

of the poet, who did not weep for "The Castaway," but who, in an hour of tearless anguish, traced a semblance to his own God-abandoned misery in the fate of that man-forsaken sailor, and cried from the depths where he struggled:—

> "No voice divine the storm allayed,
> No light propitious shone,
> When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
> We perish'd—each alone!
> But I—beneath a rougher sea,
> And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he."

"I hope William Cowper is safe and calm in heaven now," said Caroline.

"Do you pity what he suffered on earth?" asked Miss Keeldar.

"Pity him, Shirley? What can I do else? He was nearly broken-hearted when he wrote that poem, and it almost breaks one's heart to read it. But he found relief in writing it—I know he did; and that gift of poetry—the most divine bestowed on man—was, I believe, granted to allay emotions when their strength threatens harm. It seems to me, Shirley, that nobody should write poetry to exhibit intellect or attainment. Who cares for that sort of poetry? Who cares for learning—who cares for fine words in poetry? And who does not care for feeling—real feeling—however simply, even rudely expressed?"

"It seems you care for it, at all events: and certainly, in hearing that poem, one discovers that Cowper was under an impulse strong as that of the wind which drove the ship—an impulse which, while it would not suffer him to stop to add ornament to a single stanza, filled him with force to achieve the whole with consummate perfection. You managed to recite it with a steady voice, Caroline: I wonder thereat."

"Cowper's hand did not tremble in writing the

lines; why should my voice falter in repeating them? Depend on it, Shirley, no tear blistered the manuscript of 'The Castaway,' I hear in it no sob of sorrow, only the cry of despair; but, that cry uttered, I believe the deadly spasm passed from his heart; that he wept abundantly, and was comforted."

Shirley resumed her ballad minstrelsy. Stopping short, she remarked erelong—"One could have loved Cowper, if it were only for the sake of having the privilege of comforting him."

"You never would have loved Cowper," rejoined Caroline promptly: "he was not made to be loved by woman."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I know there is a kind of natures in the world—and very noble, elevated natures, too—whom love never comes near. You might have sought Cowper with the intention of loving him; and you would have looked at him, pitied him, and left him: forced away by a sense of the impossible, the incongruous, as the crew were borne from their drowning comrade by 'the furious blast.'"

"You may be right. Who told you this?"

"And what I say of Cowper, I should say of Rousseau. Was Rousseau ever loved? He loved passionately; but was his passion ever returned? I am certain, never. And if there were any female Cowpers and Rousseaus, I should assert the same of them."

"Who told you this, I ask? Did Moore?"

"Why should anybody have told me? Have I not an instinct? Can I not divine by analogy? Moore never talked to me either about Cowper, or Rousseau, or love. The voice we hear in solitude told me all I know on these subjects."

"Do you like characters of the Rousseau order, Caroline?"

"Not at all, as a whole. I sympathise intensely with certain qualities they possess: certain divine sparks in their nature dazzle my eyes, and make my soul glow. Then, again, I scorn them. They are made of clay and gold. The refuse and the ore make a mass of weakness: taken altogether, I feel them unnatural, unhealthy, repulsive."

"I dare say I should be more tolerant of a Rousseau than you would, Cary: submissive and contemplative yourself, you like the stern and the practical. By the way, you must miss that Cousin Robert of yours very much, now that you and he never meet."

"I do."

"And he must miss you?"

"That he does not."

"I cannot imagine," pursued Shirley, who had lately got a habit of introducing Moore's name into the conversation, even when it seemed to have no business there, —"I cannot imagine but that he was fond of you, since he took so much notice of you, talked to you, and taught you so much."

"He never was fond of me: he never professed to be fond of me. He took pains to prove that he only just tolerated me."

Caroline, determined not to err on the flattering side in estimating her cousin's regard for her, always now habitually thought of it and mentioned it in the most scanty measure. She had her own reasons for being less sanguine than ever in hopeful views of the future: less indulgent to pleasurable retrospections of the past.

"Of course, then," observed Miss Keeldar, "you only just tolerated him, in return?"

"Shirley, men and women are so different: they are in such a different position. Women have so few things to think about—men so many: you may have a friendship for a man, while he is almost indifferent to you. Much of what cheers your life may be dependent on

him, while not a feeling or interest of moment in his eyes may have reference to you. Robert used to be in the habit of going to London, sometimes for a week or a fortnight together; well, while he was away, I found his absence a void: there was something wanting; Briarfield was duller. Of course, I had my usual occupations; still I missed him. As I sat by myself in the evenings, I used to feel a strange certainty of conviction I cannot describe: that if a magician or a genius had, at that moment, offered me Prince Ali's tube (you remember it in the Arabian Nights?), and if, with its aid, I had been enabled to take a view of Robert —to see where he was, how occupied—I should have learned, in a startling manner, the width of the chasm which gaped between such as he and such as I. I knew that, however my thoughts might adhere to him, his were effectually sundered from me."

"Caroline," demanded Miss Keeldar abruptly, "don't you wish you had a profession—a trade?"

"I wish it fifty times a day. As it is, I often wonder what I came into the world for. I long to have something absorbing and compulsory to fill my head and hands, and to occupy my thoughts."

"Can labour alone make a human being happy?"

"No; but it can give varieties of pain, and prevent us from breaking our hearts with a single tyrant master-torture. Besides, successful labour has its recompense; a vacant, weary, lonely, hopeless life has none."

"But hard labour and learned professions, they say, make women masculine, coarse, unwomanly."

"And what does it signify, whether unmarried and never-to-be-married women are unattractive and inelegant, or not?—provided only they are decent, decorous, and neat, it is enough. The utmost which ought to be required of old maids, in the way of appearance, is that they should not absolutely offend men's

eyes as they pass them in the street; for the rest, they should be allowed, without too much scorn, to be as absorbed, grave, plain-looking, and plain-dressed as they please."

"You might be an old maid yourself, Caroline, you speak so earnestly."

"I shall be one: it is my destiny. I will never marry a Malone or a Sykes—and no one else will ever marry me."

Here fell a long pause. Shirley broke it. Again the name by which she seemed bewitched was almost the first on her lips.

"Lina—did not Moore call you Lina sometimes?"

"Yes: it is sometimes used as the abbreviation of Caroline in his native country."

"Well, Lina, do you remember my one day noticing an inequality in your hair—a curl wanting on that right side—and your telling me that it was Robert's fault, as he had once cut therefrom a long lock?"

"Yes."

"If he is, and always was, as indifferent to you as you say, why did he steal your hair?"

"I don't know—yes, I do: it was my doing, not his. Everything of that sort always was my doing. He was going from home, to London, as usual; and the night before he went, I had found in his sister's workbox a lock of black hair—a short, round curl: Hortense told me it was her brother's and a keepsake. He was sitting near the table; I looked at his head—he has plenty of hair; on the temples were many such round curls. I thought he could spare me one: I knew I should like to have it, and I asked for it. He said, on condition that he might have his choice of a tress from my head; so he got one of my long locks of hair, and I got one of his short ones. I keep his, but, I dare say, he has lost mine. It was my doing, and one of those silly deeds it distresses the heart

and sets the face on fire to think of: one of those small but sharp recollections that return, lacerating your self-respect like tiny penknives, and forcing from your lips, as you sit alone, sudden, insane-sounding interjections."

"Caroline!"

"I *do* think myself a fool, Shirley, in some respects: I *do* despise myself. But I said I would not make you my confessor; for you cannot reciprocate foible for foible: you are not weak. How steadily you watch me now! turn aside your clear, strong, she-eagle eye: it is an insult to fix it on me thus."

"What a study of character you are! Weak, certainly; but not in the sense you think.—Come in!"

This was said in answer to a tap at the door. Miss Keeldar happened to be near it at the moment, Caroline at the other end of the room; she saw a note put into Shirley's hands, and heard the words—"From Mr Moore, ma'am."

"Bring candles," said Miss Keeldar."

Caroline sat expectant.

"A communication on business," said the heiress; but when candles were brought, she neither opened nor read it. The Rector's Fanny was presently announced, and the Rector's niece went home.

Chapter xiii.

FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS ON BUSINESS.

IN Shirley's nature prevailed at times an easy indolence: there were periods when she took delight in perfect vacancy of hand and eye—moments when her thoughts, her simple existence, the fact of the world being around—and heaven above her, seemed to yield her such fulness of happiness, that she did not need to lift a finger to increase the joy. Often, after an active

morning, she would spend a sunny afternoon in lying stirless on the turf, at the foot of some tree of friendly umbrage: no society did she need but that of Caroline, and it sufficed if she were within call; no spectacle did she ask but that of the deep blue sky, and such cloudlets as sailed afar and aloft across its span; no sound but that of the bee's hum, the leaf's whisper. Her sole book in such hours was the dim chronicle of memory, or the sibyl page of anticipation: from her young eyes fell on each volume a glorious light to read by; round her lips at moments played a smile which revealed glimpses of the tale or prophecy: it was not sad, not dark. Fate had been benign to the blissful dreamer, and promised to favour her yet again. In her past were sweet passages; in her future rosy hopes.

Yet one day when Caroline drew near to rouse her, thinking she had lain long enough, behold, as she looked down, Shirley's cheek was wet as if with dew: those fine eyes of hers shone humid and brimming.

"Shirley, why do *you* cry?" asked Caroline, involuntarily laying stress on *you*.

Miss Keeldar smiled, and turned her picturesque head towards the questioner. "Because it pleases me mightily to cry," she said; "my heart is both sad and glad: but why, you good, patient child—why do you not bear me company? I only weep tears, delightful and soon wiped away: you might weep gall, if you choose."

"Why should I weep gall?"

"Mateless, solitary bird!" was the only answer.

"And are not you, too, mateless, Shirley?"

"At heart—no."

"Oh! who nestles there, Shirley?"

But Shirley only laughed gaily at this question, and alertly started up.

"I have dreamed," she said: "a mere day-dream; certainly bright, probably baseless!"

Miss Helstone was by this time free enough from illusions: she took a sufficiently grave view of the future, and fancied she knew pretty well how her own destiny and that of some others were tending. Yet old associations retained their influence over her, and it was these, and the power of habit, which still frequently drew her of an evening to the field-stile and the old thorn overlooking the Hollow.

One night, the night after the incident of the note, she had been at her usual post, watching for her beacon —watching vainly; that evening no lamp was lit. She waited till the rising of certain constellations warned her of lateness, and signed her away. In passing Fieldhead, on her return, its moonlight beauty attracted her glance, and stayed her step an instant. Tree and hall rose peaceful under the night sky and clear full orb; pearly paleness gilded the building; mellow brown gloom bosomed it round; shadows of deep green brooded above its oak-wreathed roof. The broad pavement in front shone pale also; it gleamed as if some spell had transformed the dark granite to glistering Parian: on the silvery space slept two sable shadows, thrown sharply defined from two human figures. These figures when first seen were motionless and mute; presently they moved in harmonious step, and spoke low in harmonious key. Earnest was the gaze that scrutinised them as they emerged from behind the trunk of the cedar. "Is it Mrs Pryor and Shirley?"

Certainly it is Shirley. Who else has a shape so lithe, and proud, and graceful? And her face, too, is visible: her countenance careless and pensive, and musing and mirthful, and mocking and tender. Not fearing the dew, she has not covered her head; her curls are free: they veil her neck and caress her shoulder with their tendril rings. An ornament of gold gleams through the half-closed folds of the scarf

she has wrapped across her bust, and a large bright gem glitters on the white hand which confines it. Yes, that is Shirley.

Her companion then is, of course, Mrs Pryor?

Yes, if Mrs Pryor owns six feet of stature, and if she has changed her decent widow's weeds for masculine disguise. The figure walking at Miss Keeldar's side is a man—a tall, young, stately man—it is her tenant, Robert Moore.

The pair speak softly, their words are not distinguishable: to remain a moment to gaze is not to be an eavesdropper; and as the moon shines so clearly and their countenances are so distinctly apparent, who can resist the attraction of such interest; Caroline it seems cannot, for she lingers.

There was a time when, on summer nights, Moore had been wont to walk with his cousin, as he was now walking with the heiress. Often had she gone up the Hollow with him after sunset, to scent the freshness of the earth, where a growth of fragrant herbage carpeted a certain narrow terrace, edging a deep ravine, from whose rifted gloom was heard a sound like the spirit of the lonely watercourse, moaning amongst its wet stones, and between its weedy banks, and under its dark bower of alders.

"But I used to be closer to him," thought Caroline: "he felt no obligation to treat me with homage; I needed only kindness. He used to hold my hand: he does not touch hers. And yet Shirley is not proud where she loves. There is no haughtiness in her aspect now, only a little in her port; what is natural to and inseparable from her: what she retains in her most careless as in her most guarded moments. Robert must think as I think, that he is at this instant looking down on a fine face; and he must think it with a man's brain, not with mine. She has such generous, yet soft

fire in her eyes. She smiles—what makes her smile so sweet? I saw that Robert felt its beauty, and he must have felt it with his man's heart, not with my dim woman's perceptions. They look to me like two great happy spirits; yonder silver pavement reminds me of that white shore we believe to be beyond the death-flood: they have reached it, they walk there united. And what am I—standing here in shadow, shrinking into concealment, my mind darker than my hiding-place? I am one of this world, no spirit—a poor, doomed mortal, who asks, in ignorance and hopelessness, wherefore she was born, to what end she lives; whose mind for ever runs on the question, how she shall at last encounter, and by whom be sustained through death?

"This is the worst passage I have come to yet: still I was quite prepared for it. I gave Robert up, and gave him up to Shirley, the first day I heard she was come: the first moment I saw her—rich, youthful, and lovely. She has him now: he is her lover; she is his darling: she will be far more his darling yet when they are married: the more Robert knows of Shirley, the more his soul will cleave to her. They will both be happy, and I do not grudge them their bliss; but I groan under my own misery: some of my suffering is very acute. Truly, I ought not to have been born: they should have smothered me at the first cry."

Here, Shirley stepping aside to gather a dewy flower, she and her companion turned into a path that lay nearer the gate: some of their conversation became audible. Caroline would not stay to listen: she passed away noiselessly, and the moonlight kissed the wall which her shadow had dimmed. The reader is privileged to remain, and try what he can make of the discourse.

"I cannot conceive why Nature did not give you a bulldog's head, for you have all a bulldog's tenacity," said Shirley.

"Not a flattering idea: am I so ignoble?"

"And something also you have of the same animal's silent ways of going about its work: you give no warning; you come noiselessly behind, seize fast, and hold on."

"This is guess-work; you have witnessed no such feat on my part: in your presence I have been no bull-dog."

"Your very silence indicates your race. How little you talk in general, yet how deeply you scheme! You are far-seeing; you are calculating."

"I know the ways of these people. I have gathered information of their intentions. My note last night informed you that Barraclough's trial had ended in his conviction and sentence to transportation: his associates will plot vengeance: I shall lay my plans so as to counteract, or, at least, be prepared for theirs; that is all. Having now given you as clear an explanation as I can, am I to understand that for what I propose doing I have your approbation?"

"I shall stand by you so long as you remain on the defensive. Yes."

"Good! Without any aid—even opposed or disapproved by you—I believe I should have acted precisely as I now intend to act; but in another spirit. I now feel satisfied. On the whole, I relish the position."

"I dare say you do; that is evident: you relish the work which lies before you still better than you would relish the execution of a government order for army-cloth."

"I certainly feel it congenial."

"So would old Helstone. It is true there is a shade of difference in your motives: many shades, perhaps. Shall I speak to Mr Helstone? I will, if you like."

"Act as you please: your judgment, Miss Keeldar,

will guide you accurately. I could rely on it myself, in a more difficult crisis; but I should inform you, Mr Helstone is somewhat prejudiced against me at present."

"I am aware, I have heard all about your differences: depend upon it they will melt away: he cannot resist the temptation of an alliance under present circumstances."

"I should be glad to have him: he is of true metal."

"I think so also."

"An old blade, and rusted somewhat; but the edge and temper still excellent."

"Well, you shall have him, Mr Moore; that is, if I can win him."

"Whom can you not win?"

"Perhaps not the Rector; but I will make the effort."

"Effort! He will yield for a word—a smile."

"By no means. It will cost me several cups of tea, some toast and cake, and an ample measure of remonstrances, expostulations, and persuasions. It grows rather chill."

"I perceive you shiver. Am I acting wrongly to detain you here? Yet it is so calm: I even feel it warm; and society such as yours is a pleasure to me so rare.—If you were wrapped in a thicker shawl"——

"I might stay longer, and forget how late it is, which would chagrin Mrs Pryor. We keep early and regular hours at Fieldhead, Mr Moore; and so, I am sure, does your sister at the cottage."

"Yes; but Hortense and I have an understanding the most convenient in the world, that we shall each do as we please."

"How do you please to do?"

"Three nights in the week I sleep in the mill: but I require little rest; and when it is moonlight and mild, I often haunt the Hollow till daybreak."

"When I was a very little girl, Mr Moore, my nurse

used to tell me tales of fairies being seen in that Hollow. That was before my father built the mill, when it was a perfectly solitary ravine: you will be falling under enchantment."

"I fear it is done," said Moore, in a low voice.

"But there are worse things than fairies to be guarded against," pursued Miss Keeldar.

"Things more perilous," he subjoined.

"Far more so. For instance, how would you like to meet Michael Hartley, that mad Calvinist and Jacobin weaver? They say he is addicted to poaching, and often goes abroad at night with his gun."

"I have already had the luck to meet him. We held a long argument together one night. A strange little incident it was: I liked it."

"Liked it? I admire your taste! Michael is not sane. Where did you meet him?"

"In the deepest, shadiest spot in the glen, where the water runs low, under brushwood. We sat down near that plank bridge. It was moonlight, but clouded, and very windy. We had a talk."

"On politics?"

"And religion. I think the moon was at the full, and Michael was as near crazed as possible: he uttered strange blasphemy in his Antinomian fashion."

"Excuse me, but I think you must have been nearly as mad as he, to sit listening to him."

"There is a wild interest in his ravings. The man would be half a poet, if he were not wholly a maniac; and perhaps a prophet, if he were not a profligate. He solemnly informed me that hell was foreordained my inevitable portion; that he read the mark of the beast on my brow; that I had been an outcast from the beginning. God's vengeance, he said, was preparing for me, and affirmed that in a vision of the night he had beheld the manner and the instrument of my doom. I

wanted to know further, but he left me with these words, 'The end is not yet.'"

"Have you ever seen him since?"

"About a month afterwards, in returning from market, I encountered him and Moses Barraclough both in an advanced stage of inebriation: they were praying in frantic sort at the roadside. They accosted me as Satan, bid me avaunt, and clamoured to be delivered from temptation. Again, but a few days ago, Michael took the trouble of appearing at the counting-house door, hatless, in his shirt-sleeves,—his coat and castor having been detained at the public-house in pledge; he delivered himself of the comfortable message that he could wish Mr Moore to set his house in order, as his soul was likely shortly to be required of him."

"Do you make light of these things?"

"The poor man had been drinking for weeks, and was in a state bordering on delirium tremens."

"What then? He is the more likely to attempt the fulfilment of his own prophecies."

"It would not do to permit incidents of this sort to affect one's nerves."

"Mr Moore, go home!"

"So soon?"

"Pass straight down the fields, not round by the lane and plantations."

"It is early yet."

"It is late: for my part I am going in. Will you promise me not to wander in the Hollow to-night?"

"If you wish it."

"I do wish it. May I ask whether you consider life valueless?"

"By no means: on the contrary, of late I regard my life as invaluable."

"Of late?"

"Existence is neither aimless nor hopeless to me now; and it was both three months ago. I was then drowning, and rather wished the operation over. All at once a hand was stretched to me,—such a delicate hand, I scarcely dared trust it:—its strength, however, has rescued me from ruin."

"Are you really rescued?"

"For the time: your assistance has given me another chance."

"Live to make the best of it. Don't offer yourself as a target to Michael Hartley, and good-night!"

Miss Helstone was under a promise to spend the evening of the next day at Fieldhead: she kept her promise. Some gloomy hours had she spent in the interval. Most of the time had been passed shut up in her own apartment; only issuing from it, indeed, to join her uncle at meals, and anticipating inquiries from Fanny by telling her that she was busy altering a dress, and preferred sewing upstairs, to avoid interruption.

She did sew: she plied her needle continuously, ceaselessly; but her brain worked faster than her fingers. Again, and more intensely than ever, she desired a fixed occupation,—no matter how onerous, how irksome. Her uncle must be once more entreated, but first she would consult Mrs Pryor. Her head laboured to frame projects as diligently as her hands to plait and stitch the thin texture of the muslin summer dress spread on the little white couch at the foot of which she sat. Now and then, while thus doubly occupied, a tear would fill her eyes and fall on her busy hands; but this sign of emotion was rare and quickly effaced: the sharp pang passed, the dimness cleared from her vision; she would re-thread her needle, re-arrange tuck and trimming, and work on.

Late in the afternoon she dressed herself: she

reached Fieldhead, and appeared in the oak parlour just as tea was brought in. Shirley asked her why she came so late.

"Because I have been making my dress," said she. "These fine sunny days began to make me ashamed of my winter merino; so I have furbished up a lighter garment."

"In which you look as I like to see you," said Shirley. "You are a lady-like little person, Caroline: is she not, Mrs Pryor?"

Mrs Pryor never paid compliments, and seldom indulged in remarks, favourable or otherwise, on personal appearance. On the present occasion she only swept Caroline's curls from her cheek as she took a seat near her, caressed the oval outline, and observed—"You get somewhat thin, my love, and somewhat pale. Do you sleep well? Your eyes have a languid look;" and she gazed at her anxiously.

"I sometimes dream melancholy dreams," answered Caroline; "and if I lie awake for an hour or two in the night, I am continually thinking of the Rectory as a dreary old place. You know it is very near the churchyard: the back part of the house is extremely ancient, and it is said that the out-kitchens there were once enclosed in the churchyard, and that there are graves under them. I rather long to leave the Rectory."

"My dear! You are surely not superstitious?"

"No, Mrs Pryor; but I think I grow what is called nervous. I see things under a darker aspect than I used to do. I have fears I never used to have—not of ghosts, but of omens and disastrous events; and I have an inexpressible weight on my mind which I would give the world to shake off, and I cannot do it."

"Strange!" cried Shirley. "I never feel so." Mrs Pryor said nothing.

"Fine weather, pleasant days, pleasant scenes are powerless to give me pleasure," continued Caroline. "Calm evenings are not calm to me: moonlight, which I used to think mild, now only looks mournful. Is this weakness of mind, Mrs Pryor, or what is it? I cannot help it: I often struggle against it: I reason: but reason and effort make no difference."

"You should take more exercise," said Mrs Pryor.

"Exercise! I exercise sufficiently: I exercise till I am ready to drop."

"My dear, you should go from home."

"Mrs Pryor, I should like to go from home, but not on any purposeless excursion or visit. I wish to be a governess as you have been. It would oblige me greatly if you would speak to my uncle on the subject."

"Nonsense!" broke in Shirley. "What an idea! Be a governess! Better be a slave at once. Where is the necessity of it? Why should you dream of such a painful step?"

"My dear," said Mrs Pryor, "you are very young to be a governess, and not sufficiently robust: the duties a governess undertakes are often severe."

"And I believe I want severe duties to occupy me."

"Occupy you!" cried Shirley. "When are you idle? I never saw a more industrious girl than you: you are always at work. Come," she continued—"come and sit by my side, and take some tea to refresh you. You don't care much for my friendship, then, that you wish to leave me?"

"Indeed, I do, Shirley; and I don't wish to leave you. I shall never find another friend so dear."

At which words Miss Keeldar put her hand into Caroline's with an impulsively affectionate movement, which was well seconded by the expression of her face.

"If you think so, you had better make much of me," she said, "and not run away from me. I hate to part

with those to whom I am become attached. Mrs Pryor there sometimes talks of leaving me, and says I might make a more advantageous connection than herself. I should as soon think of exchanging an old-fashioned mother for something modish and stylish. As for you —why, I began to flatter myself we were thoroughly friends; that you liked Shirley almost as well as Shirley likes you: and she does not stint her regard."

"I *do* like Shirley: I like her more and more every day; but that does not make me strong or happy."

"And would it make you strong or happy to go and live as a dependent amongst utter strangers? It would not; and the experiment must not be tried. I tell you it would fail: it is not in your nature to bear the desolate life governesses generally lead: you would fall ill: I won't hear of it."

And Miss Keeldar paused, having uttered this prohibition very decidedly. Soon she recommenced, still looking somewhat "courroucée"—"Why, it is my daily pleasure now to look out for the little cottage bonnet and the silk scarf glancing through the trees in the lane, and to know that my quiet, shrewd, thoughtful companion and monitress is coming back to me: that I shall have her sitting in the room to look at, to talk to, or to let alone, as she and I please. This may be a selfish sort of language—I know it is; but it is the language which naturally rises to my lips; therefore I utter it."

"I would write to you, Shirley."

"And what are letters? Only a sort of pis-aller. Drink some tea, Caroline: eat something—you eat nothing; laugh and be cheerful, and stay at home."

Miss Helstone shook her head and sighed. She felt what difficulty she would have to persuade any one to assist or sanction her in making that change in her life which she believed desirable. Might she only follow

her own judgment, she thought she should be able to find, perhaps a harsh, but an effectual cure for her sufferings. But this judgment, founded on circumstances she could fully explain to none, least of all to Shirley, seemed, in all eyes but her own, incomprehensible and fantastic, and was opposed accordingly.

There really was no present pecuniary need for her to leave a comfortable home and "take a situation;" and there was every probability that her uncle might in some way permanently provide for her. So her friends thought, and, as far as their lights enabled them to see, they reasoned correctly: but of Caroline's strange sufferings, which she desired so eagerly to overcome or escape, they had no idea,—of her racked nights and dismal days, no suspicion. It was at once impossible and hopeless to explain: to wait and endure was her only plan. Many that want food and clothing have cheerier lives and brighter prospects than she had; many, harassed by poverty, are in a strait less afflictive.

"Now, is your mind quieted?" inquired Shirley. "Will you consent to stay at home?"

"I shall not leave it against the approbation of my friends," was the reply; "but I think in time they will be obliged to think as I do."

During this conversation Mrs Pryor looked far from easy. Her extreme habitual reserve would rarely permit her to talk freely, or to interrogate others closely. She could think a multitude of questions she never ventured to put; give advice in her mind which her tongue never delivered. Had she been alone with Caroline, she might possibly have said something to the point: Miss Keeldar's presence, accustomed as she was to it, sealed her lips. Now, as on a thousand other occasions, inexplicable nervous scruples kept her back from interfering. She merely showed her concern for Miss Helstone in an indirect way, by asking her if the fire made her too warm,

placing a screen between her chair and the hearth, closing a window whence she imagined a draught proceeded, and often and restlessly glancing at her. Shirley resumed—"Having destroyed your plan," she said, "which I hope I have done, I shall construct a new one of my own. Every summer I make an excursion. This season I propose spending two months either at the Scotch lochs or the English lakes: that is, I shall go there, provided you consent to accompany me: if you refuse, I shall not stir a foot."

"You are very good, Shirley."

"I would be very good if you would let me: I have every disposition to be good. It is my misfortune and habit, I know, to think of myself paramount to anybody else: but who is not like me in that respect? However, when Captain Keeldar is made comfortable, accommodated with all he wants, including a sensible genial comrade, it gives him a thorough pleasure to devote his spare efforts to making that comrade happy. And should we not be happy, Caroline, in the Highlands. We will go to the Highlands. We will, if you can bear a sea-voyage, go to the Isles,—the Hebrides, the Shetland, the Orkney Islands. Would you not like that? I see you would: Mrs Pryor, I call you to witness; her face is all sunshine at the bare mention of it."

"I should like it much," returned Caroline; to whom, indeed, the notion of such a tour was not only pleasant, but gloriously reviving. Shirley rubbed her hands.

"Come, I can bestow a benefit," she exclaimed. "I can do a good deed with my cash. My thousand a year is not merely a matter of dirty bank-notes and jaundiced guineas (let me speak respectfully of both though, for I adore them); but, it may be, health to the drooping, strength to the weak, consolation to the sad. I was determined to make something of it better than a fine

old house to live in, than satin gowns to wear; better than deference from acquaintance, and homage from the poor. Here is to begin. This summer—Caroline, Mrs Pryor, and I go out into the North Atlantic, beyond the Shetland—perhaps to the Faroe Isles. We will see seals in Suderoe, and, doubtless, mermaids in Stromoe. Caroline is laughing, Mrs Pryor: *I* made her laugh; *I* have done her good."

"I shall like to go, Shirley," again said Miss Helstone. "I long to hear the sound of waves—ocean-waves, and to see them as I have imagined them in dreams, like tossing banks of green light, strewed with vanishing and re-appearing wreaths of foam, whiter than lilies. I shall delight to pass the shores of those lone rock-islets where the sea-birds live and breed unmolested. We shall be on the track of the old Scandinavians—of the Norsemen: we shall almost see the shores of Norway. This is a very vague delight that I feel, communicated by your proposal, but it *is* a delight."

"Will you think of Fitful Head now, when you lie awake at night; of gulls shrieking round it, and waves tumbling in upon it, rather than of the graves under the Rectory back-kitchen?"

"I will try; and instead of musing about remnants of shrouds, and fragments of coffins, and human bones and mould, I will fancy seals lying in the sunshine on solitary shores, where neither fisherman nor hunter ever come: of rock-crevices full of pearly eggs bedded in sea-weed; of unscared birds covering white sands in happy flocks."

"And what will become of that inexpressible weight you said you had on your mind?"

"I will try to forget it in speculation on the sway of the whole Great Deep above a herd of whales rushing through the livid and liquid thunder down from the frozen zone: a hundred of them, perhaps, wallowing, flashing, rolling in the wake of a patriarch bull, huge

enough to have been spawned before the Flood: such a creature as poor Smart had in his mind when he said—

> 'Strong against tides, the enormous whale
> Emerges as he goes.'"

"I hope our bark will meet with no such shoal, or herd, as you term it, Caroline: (I suppose you fancy the sea-mammoths pasturing about the bases of the 'everlasting hills,' devouring strange provender in the vast valleys through and above which sea-billows roll.) I should not like to be capsized by the patriarch bull."

"I suppose you expect to see mermaids, Shirley?"

"One of them at any rate: I do not bargain for less: and she is to appear in some such fashion as this. I am to be walking by myself on deck, rather late of an August evening, watching and being watched by a full harvest-moon: something is to rise white on the surface of the sea, over which that moon mounts silent, and hangs glorious: the object glitters and sinks. It rises again. I think I hear it cry with an articulate voice: I call you up from the cabin: I show you an image, fair as alabaster, emerging from the dim wave. We both see the long hair, the lifted and foam-white arm, the oval mirror brilliant as a star. It glides nearer: a human face is plainly visible; a face in the style of yours, whose straight, pure (excuse the word, it is appropriate),—whose straight, pure lineaments, paleness does not disfigure. It looks at us, but not with your eyes. I see a preternatural lure in its wily glance: it beckons. Were we men, we should spring at the sign, the cold billow would be dared for the sake of the colder enchantress; being women, we stand safe, though not dreadless. She comprehends our unmoved gaze; she feels herself powerless; anger crosses her front; she cannot charm, but she will appal us: she rises high, and glides all revealed, on the dark wave-ridge. Tempt-

ress-terror! monstrous likeness of ourselves! Are you not glad, Caroline, when at last, and with a wild shriek, she dives?"

"But, Shirley, she is not like us: we are neither temptresses, nor terrors, nor monsters."

"Some of our kind, it is said, are all three. There are men who ascribe to 'woman,' in general, such attributes."

"My dears," here interrupted Mrs Pryor, "does it not strike you that your conversation for the last ten minutes has been rather fanciful?"

"But there is no harm in our fancies: is there, ma'am?"

"We are aware that mermaids do not exist: why speak of them as if they did? How can you find interest in speaking of a nonentity?"

"I don't know," said Shirley.

"My dear, I think there is an arrival. I heard a step in the lane, while you were talking; and is not that the garden-gate which creaks?"

Shirley stepped to the window.

"Yes, there is some one," said she, turning quietly away; and, as she resumed her seat, a sensitive flush animated her face, while a trembling ray at once kindled and softened her eye. She raised her hand to her chin, cast her gaze down, and seemed to think as she waited.

The servant announced Mr Moore, and Shirley turned round when Mr Moore appeared at the door. His figure seemed very tall as he entered, and stood in contrast with the three ladies, none of whom could boast a stature much beyond the average. He was looking well, better than he had been known to look for the past twelve months: a sort of renewed youth glowed in his eye and colour, and an invigorated hope and settled purpose sustained his bearing: firmness his countenance still indicated, but not austerity: it looked as cheerful as it was earnest.

"I am just returned from Stilbro'," he said to Miss Keeldar, as he greeted her; "and I thought I would call to impart to you the result of my mission."

"You did right not to keep me in suspense," she said; "and your visit is well-timed. Sit down: we have not finished tea. Are you English enough to relish tea; or do you faithfully adhere to coffee?"

Moore accepted tea.

"I am learning to be a naturalised Englishman," said he; "my foreign habits are leaving me one by one."

And now he paid his respects to Mrs Pryor, and paid them well, with a grave modesty that became his age, compared with hers. Then he looked at Caroline —not, however, for the first time—his glance had fallen upon her before: he bent towards her as she sat, gave her his hand, and asked her how she was. The light from the window did not fall upon Miss Helstone, her back was turned towards it: a quiet though rather low reply, a still demeanour, and the friendly protection of early twilight, kept out of view each traitorous symptom. None could affirm that she had trembled or blushed, that her heart had quaked, or her nerves thrilled: none could prove emotion: a greeting showing less effusion was never interchanged. Moore took the empty chair near her, opposite Miss Keeldar. He had placed himself well: his neighbour, screened by the very closeness of his vicinage from his scrutiny, and sheltered further by the dusk which deepened each moment, soon regained not merely *seeming*, but *real* mastery of the feelings which had started into insurrection at the first announcement of his name.

He addressed his conversation to Miss Keeldar.

"I went to the barracks," he said, "and had an interview with Colonel Ryde: he approved my plans, and promised the aid I wanted: indeed, he offered a more numerous force than I require—half-a-dozen will

suffice. I don't intend to be swamped by redcoats: they are needed for appearance rather than anything else: my main reliance is on my own civilians."

"And on their Captain," interposed Shirley.

"What, Captain Keeldar?" inquired Moore, slightly smiling, and not lifting his eyes: the tone of raillery in which he said this was very respectful and suppressed.

"No," returned Shirley, answering the smile; "Captain Gérard Moore, who trusts much to the prowess of his own right arm, I believe."

"Furnished with his counting-house ruler," added Moore. Resuming his usual gravity, he went on: "I received by this evening's post a note from the Home Secretary in answer to mine: it appears they are uneasy at the state of matters here in the north; they especially condemn the supineness and pusillanimity of the mill-owners; they say, as I have always said, that inaction, under present circumstances, is criminal, and that cowardice is cruelty, since both can only encourage disorder, and lead finally to sanguinary outbreaks. There is the note: I brought it for your perusal; and there is a batch of newspapers, containing further accounts of proceedings in Nottingham, Manchester, and elsewhere."

He produced letters and journals, and laid them before Miss Keeldar. While she perused them, he took his tea quietly; but, though his tongue was still, his observant faculties seemed by no means off duty. Mrs Pryor, sitting in the background, did not come within the range of his glance, but the two younger ladies had the full benefit thereof.

Miss Keeldar, placed directly opposite, was seen without effort: she was the object his eyes, when lifted, naturally met first; and, as what remained of daylight—the gilding of the west—was upon her, her shape rose in relief from the dark panelling behind. Shirley's

clear cheek was tinted yet with the colour which had risen into it a few minutes since: the dark lashes of her eyes looking down as she read, the dusk yet delicate line of her eyebrows, the almost sable gloss of her curls, made her heightened complexion look fine as the bloom of a red wild-flower by contrast. There was natural grace in her attitude, and there was artistic effect in the ample and shining folds of her silk dress—an attire simply fashioned, but almost splendid from the shifting brightness of its dye, warp and woof being of tints deep and changing as the hue on a pheasant's neck. A glancing bracelet on her arm produced the contrast of gold and ivory: there was something brilliant in the whole picture. It is to be supposed that Moore thought so, as his eye dwelt long on it, but he seldom permitted his feelings or his opinions to exhibit themselves in his face: his temperament boasted a certain amount of phlegm, and he preferred an undemonstrative, not ungentle, but serious aspect, to any other.

He could not, by looking straight before him, see Caroline, as she was close at his side; it was necessary, therefore, to manœuvre a little to get her well within the range of his observation: he leaned back in his chair, and looked down on her. In Miss Helstone, neither he nor any one else could discover brilliancy. Sitting in the shade, without flowers or ornaments, her attire the modest muslin dress, colourless but for its narrow stripe of pale azure, her complexion unflushed, unexcited, the very brownness of her hair and eyes invisible by this faint light, she was, compared with the heiress, as a graceful pencil-sketch compared with a vivid painting. Since Robert had seen her last, a great change had been wrought in her; whether he perceived it, might not be ascertained: he said nothing to that effect.

"How is Hortense?" asked Caroline softly.

"Very well; but she complains of being unemployed; she misses you."

"Tell her that I miss her, and that I write and read a portion of French every day."

"She will ask if you sent your love: she is always particular on that point. You know she likes attention."

"My best love—my very best; and say to her, that whenever she has time to write me a little note, I shall be glad to hear from her."

"What if I forget? I am not the surest messenger of compliments."

"No, don't forget, Robert: it is no compliment—it is in good earnest."

"And must therefore be delivered punctually?"

"If you please."

"Hortense will be ready to shed tears. She is tender-hearted on the subject of her pupil; yet she reproaches you sometimes for obeying your uncle's injunctions too literally. Affection, like love, will be unjust now and then."

And Caroline made no answer to this observation; for indeed her heart was troubled, and to her eyes she would have raised her handkerchief, if she had dared. If she had dared, too, she would have declared how the very flowers in the garden of Hollow's Cottage were dear to her; how the little parlour of that house was her earthly paradise; how she longed to return to it, as much almost as the First Woman, in her exile, must have longed to revisit Eden. Not daring, however, to say these things, she held her peace: she sat quiet at Robert's side, waiting for him to say something more. It was long since this proximity had been hers—long since his voice had addressed her; could she, with any show of probability, even of possibility, have imagined that the meeting gave him pleasure, to her it would have given deep bliss. Yet, even in doubt that it pleased—

in dread that it might annoy him—she received the boon of the meeting as an imprisoned bird would the admission of sunshine to its cage: it is of no use arguing —contending against the sense of present happiness: to be near Robert was to be revived.

Miss Keeldar laid down the papers.

"And are you glad or sad for all these menacing tidings?" she inquired of her tenant.

"Not precisely either; but I certainly am instructed. I see that our only plan is to be firm. I see that efficient preparation and a resolute attitude are the best means of averting bloodshed."

He then inquired if she had observed some particular paragraph, to which she replied in the negative, and he rose to show it to her: he continued the conversation standing before her. From the tenor of what he said, it appeared evident that they both apprehended disturbances in the neighbourhood of Briarfield, though in what form they expected them to break out was not specified. Neither Caroline nor Mrs Pryor asked questions: the subject did not appear to be regarded as one ripe for free discussion; therefore the lady and her tenant were suffered to keep details to themselves, unimportuned by the curiosity of their listeners.

Miss Keeldar, in speaking to Mr Moore, took a tone at once animated and dignified, confidential and self-respecting. When, however, the candles were brought in, and the fire was stirred up, and the fulness of light thus produced rendered the expression of her countenance legible, you could see that she was all interest, life, and earnestness: there was nothing coquettish in her demeanour: whatever she felt for Moore, she felt it seriously. And serious, too, were his feelings, and settled were his views, apparently; for he made no petty effort to attract, dazzle, or impress. He contrived, notwithstanding, to command a little; because the

deeper voice, however mildly modulated, the somewhat harder mind, now and then, though involuntarily and unintentionally, bore down by some peremptory phrase or tone the mellow accents and susceptible, if high, nature of Shirley. Miss Keeldar looked happy in conversing with him, and her joy seemed twofold,—a joy of the past and present, of memory and of hope.

What I have just said are Caroline's ideas of the pair: she felt what has just been described. In thus feeling, she tried not to suffer; but suffered sharply, nevertheless. She suffered, indeed, miserably: a few minutes before, her famished heart had tasted a drop and crumb of nourishment, that, if freely given, would have brought back abundance of life where life was failing; but the generous feast was snatched from her, spread before another, and she remained but a bystander at the banquet.

The clock struck nine: it was Caroline's time for going home: she gathered up her work, put the embroidery, the scissors, the thimble into her bag: she bade Mrs Pryor a quiet good-night, receiving from that lady a warmer pressure of the hand than usual: she stepped up to Miss Keeldar.

"Good-night, Shirley!"

Shirley started up. "What!—so soon? Are you going already?"

"It is past nine."

"I never heard the clock. You will come again to-morrow, and you will be happy to-night, will you not? Remember our plans."

"Yes," said Caroline: "I have not forgotten."

Her mind misgave her that neither those plans nor any other could permanently restore her mental tranquillity. She turned to Robert, who stood close behind her: as he looked up, the light of the candles on the mantelpiece fell full on her face: all its paleness,

all its change, all its forlorn meaning were clearly revealed. Robert had good eyes, and might have seen it, if he would: whether he did see it, nothing indicated.

"Good-night!" she said, shaking like a leaf, offering her thin hand hastily, anxious to part from him quickly.

"You are going home?" he asked, not touching her hand.

"Yes."

"Is Fanny come for you?"

"Yes."

"I may as well accompany you a step of the way: not up to the Rectory, though, lest my old friend, Helstone, should shoot me from the window."

He laughed and took his hat. Caroline spoke of unnecessary trouble: he told her to put on her bonnet and shawl. She was quickly ready, and they were soon both in the open air. Moore drew her hand under his arm, just in his old manner,—that manner which she ever felt to be so kind.

"You may run on, Fanny," he said to the housemaid: "we shall overtake you:" and when the girl had got a little in advance, he enclosed Caroline's hand in his, and said he was glad to find she was a familiar guest at Fieldhead: he hoped her intimacy with Miss Keeldar would continue; such society would be both pleasant and improving.

Caroline replied that she liked Shirley.

"And there is no doubt the liking is mutual," said Moore: "if she professes friendship, be certain she is sincere: she cannot feign; she scorns hypocrisy. And, Caroline, are we never to see you at Hollow's Cottage again?"

"I suppose not, unless my uncle should change his mind."

"Are you much alone now?"

"Yes; a good deal. I have little pleasure in any society but Miss Keeldar's."

"Have you been quite well lately?"

"Quite."

"You must take care of yourself. Be sure not to neglect exercise. Do you know I fancied you somewhat altered;—a little fallen away, and pale. Is your uncle kind to you?"

"Yes; he is just as he always is."

"Not too tender, that is to say; not too protective and attentive. And what ails you, then?—tell me, Lina."

"Nothing, Robert?" but her voice faltered.

"That is to say, nothing that you will tell me: I am not to be taken into confidence. Separation is then quite to estrange us, is it?"

"I do not know: sometimes I almost fear it is."

"But it ought not to have that effect. 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and days o' lang syne?'"

"Robert, I don't forget."

"It is two months, I should think, Caroline, since you were at the cottage."

"Since I was *within* it—yes."

"Have you ever passed that way in your walk?"

"I have come to the top of the fields sometimes of an evening, and looked down. Once I saw Hortense in the garden watering her flowers, and I know at what time you light your lamp in the counting-house: I have waited for it to shine out now and then; and I have seen you bend between it and the window: I knew it was you—I could almost trace the outline of your form."

"I wonder I never encountered you: I occasionally walk to the top of the Hollow's fields after sunset."

"I know you do: I had almost spoken to you one night, you passed so near me."

"Did I? I passed near you, and did not see you! Was I alone?"

"I saw you twice, and neither time were you alone."

"Who was my companion? Probably nothing but Joe Scott, or my own shadow by moonlight."

"No; neither Joe Scott nor your shadow, Robert. The first time you were with Mr Yorke; and the second time what you call your shadow was a shape with a white forehead and dark curls, and a sparkling necklace round its neck; but I only just got a glimpse of you and that fairy shadow: I did not wait to hear you converse."

"It appears you walk invisible. I noticed a ring on your hand this evening; can it be the ring of Gyges? Henceforth, when sitting in the counting-house by myself, perhaps at dead of night, I shall permit myself to imagine that Caroline may be leaning over my shoulder reading with me from the same book, or sitting at my side engaged in her own particular task, and now and then raising her unseen eyes to my face to read there my thoughts."

"You need fear no such infliction: I do not come near you: I only stand afar off, watching what may become of you."

"When I walk out along the hedgerows in the evening after the mill is shut—or at night, when I take the watchman's place—I shall fancy the flutter of every little bird over its nest, the rustle of every leaf, a movement made by you; tree-shadows will take your shape: in the white sprays of hawthorn, I shall imagine glimpses of you. Lina, you will haunt me."

"I will never be where you would not wish me to be, nor see nor hear what you would wish unseen and unheard."

"I shall see you in my very mill in broad daylight:

indeed, I have seen you there once. But a week ago, I was standing at the top of one of my long rooms, girls were working at the other end, and amongst half-a-dozen of them, moving to and fro, I seemed to see a figure resembling yours. It was some effect of doubtful light or shade, or of dazzling sunbeam. I walked up to this group; what I sought had glided away: I found myself between two buxom lasses in pinafores."

"I shall not follow you into your mill, Robert, unless you call me there."

"Nor is that the only occasion on which imagination has played me a trick. One night, when I came home late from market, I walked into the cottage parlour thinking to find Hortense; but instead of her, I thought I found you. There was no candle in the room: my sister had taken the light upstairs with her; the window-blind was not drawn, and broad moonbeams poured through the panes: there you were, Lina, at the casement, shrinking a little to one side in an attitude not unusual with you. You were dressed in white, as I have seen you dressed at an evening party. For half a second, your fresh, living face seemed turned towards me, looking at me; for half a second, my idea was to go and take your hand, to chide you for your long absence, and welcome your present visit. Two steps forward broke the spell: the drapery of the dress changed outline; the tints of the complexion dissolved, and were formless: positively, as I reached the spot, there was nothing left but the sweep of a white muslin curtain, and a balsam plant in a flower-pot, covered with a flush of bloom—'sic transit,' et cetera."

"It was not my wraith, then? I almost thought it was."

"No; only gauze, crockery, and pink blossom: a sample of earthly illusions."

"I wonder you have time for such illusions, occupied as your mind must be."

"So do I. But I find in myself, Lina, two natures; one for the world and business, and one for home and leisure. Gérard Moore is a hard dog, brought up to mill and market: the person you call your cousin Robert is sometimes a dreamer, who lives elsewhere than in Cloth-hall and counting-house."

"Your two natures agree with you: I think you are looking in good spirits and health: you have quite lost the harassed air which it often pained one to see in your face a few months ago."

"Do you observe that? Certainly, I am disentangled of some difficulties: I have got clear of some shoals, and have more sea-room."

"And, with a fair wind, you may now hope to make a prosperous voyage?"

"I may *hope* it—yes—but hope is deceptive: there is no controlling wind or wave: gusts and swells perpetually trouble the mariner's course; he dare not dismiss from his mind the expectation of tempest."

"But you are ready for a breeze—you are a good seaman—an able commander: you are a skilful pilot, Robert; you will weather the storm."

"My kinswoman always thinks the best of me, but I will take her words for a propitious omen; I will consider that in meeting her to-night, I have met with one of those birds whose appearance is to the sailor the harbinger of good-luck."

"A poor harbinger of good-luck is she who can do nothing—who has no power. I feel my incapacity: it is of no use saying I have the will to serve you, when I cannot prove it; yet I have that will. I wish you success; I wish you high fortune and true happiness."

"When did you ever wish me anything else? What is Fanny waiting for—I told her to walk on? Oh! we have reached the churchyard: then, we are to part here, I suppose: we might have sat a few minutes in

the church-porch, if the girl had not been with us. It is so fine a night, so summer-mild and still, I have no particular wish to return yet to the Hollow."

"But we cannot sit in the porch now, Robert."

Caroline said this because Moore was turning her round towards it.

"Perhaps not, but tell Fanny to go in; say we are coming, a few minutes will make no difference."

The church-clock struck ten.

"My uncle will be coming out to take his usual sentinel round, and he always surveys the church and churchyard."

"And if he does? If it were not for Fanny, who knows we are here, I should find pleasure in dodging and eluding him. We could be under the east window when he is at the porch; as he came round to the north side we could wheel off to the south; we might at a pinch hide behind some of the monuments: that tall erection of the Wynnes would screen us completely."

"Robert, what good spirits you have! Go—go!" added Caroline hastily, "I hear the front door"——

"I don't want to go; on the contrary, I want to stay."

"You know my uncle will be terribly angry: he forbade me to see you because you are a Jacobin."

"A queer Jacobin!"

"Go, Robert, he is coming; I hear him cough."

"Diable! It is strange—what a pertinacious wish I feel to stay!"

"You remember what he did to Fanny's"—— began Caroline, and stopped abruptly short. Sweetheart was the word that ought to have followed, but she could not utter it; it seemed calculated to suggest ideas she had no intention to suggest; ideas delusive and disturbing. Moore was less scrupulous; "Fanny's sweetheart?" he said at once. "He gave him a shower-bath

under the pump—did he not? He'd do as much for me, I daresay, with pleasure. I should like to provoke the old Turk—not however against *you*: but he would make a distinction between a cousin and a lover, would he not?"

"Oh! he would not think of you in that way, of course not; his quarrel with you is entirely political; yet I should not like the breach to be widened, and he is so testy. Here he is at the garden gate—for your own sake and mine, Robert, go!"

The beseeching words were aided by a beseeching gesture and a more beseeching look. Moore covered her clasped hands an instant with his, answered her upward by a downward gaze, said "Good-night!" and went.

Caroline was in a moment at the kitchen-door behind Fanny; the shadow of the shovel-hat at that very instant fell on a moonlit tomb; the Rector emerged erect as a cane, from his garden, and proceeded in slow march, his hands behind him, down the cemetery. Moore was almost caught: he had to "dodge" after all, to coast round the church, and finally to bend his tall form behind the Wynnes' ambitious monument. There he was forced to hide full ten minutes, kneeling with one knee on the turf, his hat off, his curls bare to the dew, his dark eye shining, and his lips parted with inward laughter at his position; for the Rector meantime stood coolly star-gazing, and taking snuff within three feet of him.

It happened, however, that Mr Helstone had no suspicion whatever on his mind; for being usually but vaguely informed of his niece's movements, not thinking it worth while to follow them closely, he was not aware that she had been out at all that day, and imagined her then occupied with book or work in her chamber: where, indeed, she was by this time; though not ab-

sorbed in the tranquil employment he ascribed to her, but standing at her window with fast-throbbing heart, peeping anxiously from behind the blind, watching for her uncle to re-enter and her cousin to escape; and at last she was gratified; she heard Mr Helstone come in; she saw Robert stride the tombs and vault the wall; she then went down to prayers. When she returned to her chamber, it was to meet the memory of Robert. Slumber's visitation was long averted: long she sat at her lattice, long gazed down on the old garden and older church, on the tombs laid out all grey and calm, and clear in moonlight. She followed the steps of the night, on its pathway of stars, far into the "wee sma' hours ayont the twal': " she was with Moore, in spirit, the whole time: she was at his side: she heard his voice: she gave her hand into his hand; it rested warm in his fingers. When the church-clock struck, when any other sound stirred, when a little mouse familiar to her chamber, an intruder for which she would never permit Fanny to lay a trap, came rattling amongst the links of her locket chain, her one ring, and another trinket or two on the toilet-table, to nibble a bit of biscuit laid ready for it, she looked up, recalled momentarily to the real. Then she said half aloud, as if deprecating the accusation of some unseen and unheard monitor, "I am not cherishing love-dreams: I am only thinking because I cannot sleep; of course, I know he will marry Shirley."

With returning silence, with the lull of the chime, and the retreat of her small untamed and unknown protégé, she still resumed the dream, nestling to the vision's side,—listening to, conversing with it. It paled at last: as dawn approached, the setting stars and breaking day dimmed the creation of Fancy: the wakened song of birds hushed her whispers. The tale full of fire, quick with interest, borne away by the morning

wind, became a vague murmur. The shape that, seen in a moonbeam, lived, had a pulse, had movement, wore health's glow and youth's freshness, turned cold and ghostly grey, confronted with the red of sunrise. It wasted. She was left solitary at last: she crept to her couch, chill and dejected.

Chapter xiv.

SHIRLEY SEEKS TO BE SAVED BY WORKS.

"OF course, I know he will marry Shirley," were her first words when she rose in the morning. "And he ought to marry her: she can help him," she added firmly. "But I shall be forgotten when they *are* married," was the cruel succeeding thought. "Oh! I shall be wholly forgotten! And what—*what* shall I do when Robert is taken quite from me? Where shall I turn? *My* Robert! I wish I could justly call him mine: but I am poverty and incapacity; Shirley is wealth and power: and she is beauty too, and love—I cannot deny it. This is no sordid suit: she loves him—not with inferior feelings: she loves, or *will* love, as he must feel proud to be loved. Not a valid objection can be made. Let them be married then: but afterwards I shall be nothing to him. As for being his sister, and all that stuff, I despise it. I will either be all or nothing to a man like Robert: no feeble shuffling or false cant is endurable. Once let that pair be united, and I will certainly leave them. As for lingering about, playing the hypocrite, and pretending to calm sentiments of friendship, when my soul will be wrung with other feelings, I shall not descend to such degradation. As little could I fill the place of their mutual friend as that of their deadly foe: as little

could I stand between them as trample over them. Robert is a first-rate man—in my eyes: I *have* loved, *do* love, and *must* love him. I would be his wife, if I could; as I cannot, I must go where I shall never see him. There is but one alternative—to cleave to him as if I were a part of him, or to be sundered from him wide as the two poles of a sphere. Sunder me then, Providence. Part us speedily."

Some such aspirations as these were again working in her mind late in the afternoon, when the apparition of one of the personages haunting her thoughts passed the parlour window. Miss Keeldar sauntered slowly by: her gait, her countenance wearing that mixture of wistfulness and carelessness which, when quiescent, was the wonted cast of her look, and character of her bearing. When animated, the carelessness quite vanished, the wistfulness became blent with a genial gaiety, seasoning the laugh, the smile, the glance, with an unique flavour of sentiment, so that mirth from her never resembled "the crackling of thorns under a pot."

"What do you mean by not coming to see me this afternoon, as you promised?" was her address to Caroline as she entered the room.

"I was not in the humour," replied Miss Helstone, very truly.

Shirley had already fixed on her a penetrating eye.

"No," she said; "I see you are not in the humour for loving me: you are in one of your sunless, inclement moods, when one feels a fellow-creature's presence is not welcome to you. You have such moods: are you aware of it?"

"Do you mean to stay long, Shirley?"

"Yes; I am come to have my tea, and must have it before I go. I shall take the liberty then of removing my bonnet, without being asked."

And this she did, and then stood on the rug with her hands behind her.

"A pretty expression you have in your countenance," she went on, still gazing keenly, though not inimically, rather indeed pityingly at Caroline. "Wonderfully self-supported you look, you solitude-seeking, wounded deer. Are you afraid Shirley will worry you, if she discovers that you are hurt, and that you bleed?"

"I never do fear Shirley."

"But sometimes you dislike her: often you avoid her. Shirley can feel when she is slighted and shunned. If you had not walked home in the company you did last night, you would have been a different girl to-day. What time did you reach the Rectory?"

"By ten."

"Humph! You took three-quarters of an hour to walk a mile. Was it you, or Moore, who lingered so?"

"Shirley, you talk nonsense."

"*He* talked nonsense—that I doubt not; or he looked it, which is a thousand times worse: I see the reflection of his eyes on your forehead at this moment. I feel disposed to call him out, if I could only get a trustworthy second: I feel desperately irritated: I felt so last night, and have felt it all day."

"You don't ask me why," she proceeded, after a pause, "you little silent, over-modest thing; and you don't deserve that I should pour out my secrets into your lap without an invitation. Upon my word, I could have found it in my heart to have dogged Moore yesterday evening with dire intent: I have pistols, and can use them."

"Stuff, Shirley! Which would you have shot—me or Robert?"

"Neither, perhaps—perhaps myself—more likely a bat or a tree-bough. He is a puppy—your cousin: a quiet, serious, sensible, judicious, ambitious puppy. I

see him standing before me, talking his half-stern, half-gentle talk, bearing me down (as I am very conscious he does) with his fixity of purpose, &c.; and then—— I have no patience with him!"

Miss Keeldar started off on a rapid walk through the room, repeating energetically that she had no patience with men in general, and with her tenant in particular.

"You are mistaken," urged Caroline, in some anxiety: "Robert is no puppy or male flirt; I can vouch for that."

"*You* vouch for it! Do you think I'll take your word on the subject? There is no one's testimony I would not credit sooner than yours. To advance Moore's fortune, you would cut off your right hand."

"But not tell lies; and if I speak the truth, I must assure you that he was just civil to me last night—that was all."

"I never asked what he was—I can guess: I saw him from the window take your hand in his long fingers, just as he went out at my gate."

"That is nothing. I am not a stranger, you know: I am an old acquaintance, and his cousin."

"I feel indignant; and that is the long and short of the matter," responded Miss Keeldar. "All my comfort," she added presently, "is broken up by his manœuvres. He keeps intruding between you and me: without him we should be good friends; but that six feet of puppy-hood makes a perpetually-recurring eclipse of our friendship. Again and again he crosses and obscures the disk I want always to see clear: ever and anon he renders me to you a mere bore and nuisance."

"No, Shirley; no."

"He does. You did not want my society this afternoon, and I feel it hard: you are naturally somewhat reserved, but I am a social personage, who cannot live alone. If we were but left unmolested, I have that

regard for you that I could bear you in my presence for ever, and not for the fraction of a second do I ever wish to be rid of you. You cannot say as much respecting me."

"Shirley, I can say anything you wish: Shirley, I like you."

"You will wish me at Jericho to-morrow, Lina."

"I shall not. I am every day growing more accustomed to—fonder of you. You know I am too English to get up a vehement friendship all at once; but you are so much better than common—you are so different to everyday young ladies—I esteem you—I value you: you are never a burden to me—never. Do you believe what I say?"

"Partly," replied Miss Keeldar, smiling rather incredulously; "but you are a peculiar personage: quiet as you look, there is both a force and a depth somewhere within, not easily reached or appreciated: then you certainly are not happy."

"And unhappy people are rarely good—is that what you mean?"

"Not at all: I mean rather that unhappy people are often pre-occupied, and not in the mood for discoursing with companions of my nature. Moreover, there is a sort of unhappiness which not only depresses, but corrodes—and that, I fear, is your portion. Will pity do you any good, Lina? If it will, take some from Shirley: she offers largely, and warrants the article genuine."

"Shirley, I never had a sister—you never had a sister; but it flashes on me at this moment how sisters feel towards each other. Affection twined with their life, which no shocks of feeling can uproot, which little quarrels only trample an instant that it may spring more freshly when the pressure is removed: affection that no passion can ultimately outrival, with which even love

itself cannot do more than compete in force and truth. Love hurts us so, Shirley: it is so tormenting, so racking, and it burns away our strength with its flame; in affection is no pain and no fire, only sustenance and balm. I am supported and soothed when you—that is, *you only*—are near, Shirley. Do you believe me now?"

"I am always easy of belief when the creed pleases me. We really are friends then, Lina, in spite of the black eclipse?"

"We really are," returned the other, drawing Shirley towards her, and making her sit down, "chance what may."

"Come, then, we will talk of something else than the Troubler." But at this moment the Rector came in, and the "something else" of which Miss Keeldar was about to talk was not again alluded to till the moment of her departure; she then delayed a few minutes in the passage to say—"Caroline, I wish to tell you that I have a great weight on my mind: my conscience is quite uneasy, as if I had committed, or was going to commit, a crime. It is not my *private* conscience, you must understand, but my landed-proprietor and lord-of-the-manor conscience. I have got into the clutch of an eagle with iron talons. I have fallen under a stern influence, which I scarcely approve, but cannot resist. Something will be done ere long, I fear, which it by no means pleases me to think of. To ease my mind, and to prevent harm as far as I can, I mean to enter on a series of good works. Don't be surprised, therefore, if you see me all at once turn outrageously charitable. I have no idea how to begin, but you must give me some advice: we will talk more on the subject to-morrow; and just ask that excellent person, Miss Ainley, to step up to Fieldhead: I have some notion of putting myself under her tuition—won't she have a precious pupil?

Drop a hint to her, Lina, that, though a well-meaning, I am rather a neglected character, and then she will feel less scandalised at my ignorance about clothing societies, and such things."

On the morrow, Caroline found Shirley sitting gravely at her desk, with an account-book, a bundle of bank-notes, and a well-filled purse before her. She was looking mighty serious, but a little puzzled. She said she had been "casting an eye" over the weekly expenditure in housekeeping at the Hall, trying to find out where she could retrench; that she had also just given audience to Mrs Gill, the cook, and had sent that person away with a notion that her (Shirley's) brain was certainly crazed. "I have lectured her on the duty of being careful," said she, "in a way quite new to her. So eloquent was I on the text of economy, that I surprised myself; for, you see, it is altogether a fresh idea: I never thought, much less spoke, on the subject till lately. But it is all theory; for when I came to the practical part I could retrench nothing. I had not firmness to take off a single pound of butter, or to prosecute to any clear result an inquest into the destiny of either dripping, lard, bread, cold meat, or other kitchen perquisite whatever. I know we never get up illuminations at Fieldhead, but I could not ask the meaning of sundry quite unaccountable pounds of candles: we do not wash for the parish, yet I viewed in silence items of soap and bleaching-powder calculated to satisfy the solicitude of the most anxious inquirer after our position in reference to those articles: carnivorous I am not, nor is Mrs Pryor, nor is Mrs Gill herself, yet I only hemmed and opened my eyes a little wide when I saw butchers' bills whose figures seemed to prove that fact —falsehood, I mean. Caroline, you may laugh at me, but you can't change me. I am a poltroon on certain points—I feel it. There is a base alloy of moral

cowardice in my composition. I blushed and hung my head before Mrs Gill, when she ought to have been faltering confessions to me. I found it impossible to get up the spirit even to hint, much less to prove, to her that she was a cheat. I have no calm dignity—no true courage about me."

"Shirley, what fit of self-injustice is this? My uncle, who is not given to speak well of women, says there are not ten thousand men in England as genuinely fearless as you."

"I am fearless, physically: I am never nervous about danger. I was not startled from self-possession when Mr Wynne's great red bull rose with a bellow before my face, as I was crossing the cowslip-lea alone, stooped his begrimed, sullen head, and made a run at me: but I was afraid of seeing Mrs Gill brought to shame and confusion of face. You have twice—ten times my strength of mind on certain subjects, Caroline: you, whom no persuasions can induce to pass a bull, however quiet he looks, would have firmly shown my housekeeper she had done wrong; then you would have gently and wisely admonished her; and at last, I daresay, provided she had seemed penitent, you would have very sweetly forgiven her. Of this conduct I am incapable. However, in spite of exaggerated imposition, I still find we live within our means: I have money in hand, and I really must do some good with it. The Briarfield poor are badly off: they must be helped. What ought I to do, think you, Lina? Had I not better distribute the cash at once?"

"No, indeed, Shirley: you will not manage properly. I have often noticed that your only notion of charity is to give shillings and half-crowns in a careless, freehanded sort of way, which is liable to continual abuse. You must have a prime minister, or you will get yourself into a series of scrapes. You suggested

Miss Ainley yourself: to Miss Ainley I will apply; and, meantime, promise to keep quiet, and not begin throwing away your money. What a great deal you have, Shirley!—you must feel very rich with all that?"

"Yes; I feel of consequence. It is not an immense sum, but I feel responsible for its disposal; and really this responsibility weighs on my mind more heavily than I could have expected. They say that there are some families almost starving to death in Briarfield: some of my own cottagers are in wretched circumstances: I must and will help them."

"Some people say we shouldn't give alms to the poor, Shirley."

"They are great fools for their pains. For those who are not hungry, it is easy to palaver about the degradation of charity, and so on; but they forget the brevity of life, as well as its bitterness. We have none of us long to live: let us help each other through seasons of want and woe, as well as we can, without heeding in the least the scruples of vain philosophy."

"But you do help others, Shirley: you give a great deal as it is."

"Not enough: I must give more, or, I tell you, my brother's blood will some day be crying to Heaven against me. For, after all, if political incendiaries come here to kindle conflagration in the neighbourhood, and my property is attacked, I shall defend it like a tigress—I know I shall. Let me listen to Mercy as long as she is near me: her voice once drowned by the shout of ruffian defiance, and I shall be full of impulses to resist and quell. If once the poor gather and rise in the form of the mob, I shall turn against them as an aristocrat: if they bully me, I must defy; if they attack, I must resist,—and I will."

"You talk like Robert."

"I feel like Robert, only more fierily. Let them meddle with Robert, or Robert's mill, or Robert's interests, and I shall hate them. At present I am no patrician, nor do I regard the poor around me as plebeians; but if once they violently wrong me or mine, and then presume to dictate to us, I shall quite forget pity for their wretchedness and respect for their poverty, in scorn of their ignorance and wrath at their insolence."

"Shirley—how your eyes flash!"

"Because my soul burns. Would you, any more than me, let Robert be borne down by numbers?

"If I had your power to aid Robert, I would use it as you mean to use it. If I could be such a friend to him as you can be, I would stand by him, as you mean to stand by him—till death."

"And now, Lina, though your eyes don't flash, they glow. You drop your lids; but I saw a kindled spark. However, it is not yet come to fighting. What I want to do is to *prevent* mischief. I cannot forget, either day or night, that these embittered feelings of the poor against the rich have been generated in suffering: they would neither hate nor envy us if they did not deem us so much happier than themselves. To allay this suffering, and thereby lessen this hate, let me, out of my abundance, give abundantly: and that the donation may go farther, let it be made wisely. To that intent, we must introduce some clear, calm, practical sense into our councils: so go, and fetch Miss Ainley."

Without another word, Caroline put on her bonnet and departed. It may, perhaps, appear strange that neither she nor Shirley thought of consulting Mrs Pryor on their scheme; but they were wise in abstaining. To have consulted her—and this they knew by instinct—would only have been to involve her in painful embarrassment. She was far better informed, better read, a deeper thinker than Miss Ainley, but of admini-

strative energy, of executive activity, she had none. She would subscribe her own modest mite to a charitable object willingly,—secret almsgiving suited her; but in public plans, on a large scale, she could take no part: as to originating them, that was out of the question. This Shirley knew, and therefore she did not trouble Mrs Pryor by unavailing conferences, which could only remind her of her own deficiencies, and do no good.

It was a bright day for Miss Ainley when she was summoned to Fieldhead to deliberate on projects so congenial to her; when she was seated with all honour and deference at a table with paper, pen, ink and—what was best of all—cash before her, and requested to draw up a regular plan for administering relief to the destitute poor of Briarfield. She, who knew them all, had studied their wants, had again and again felt in what way they might best be succoured, could the means of succour only be found, was fully competent to the undertaking, and a meek exultation gladdened her kind heart as she felt herself able to answer clearly and promptly the eager questions put by the two young girls; as she showed them in her answers how much and what serviceable knowledge she had acquired of the condition of her fellow-creatures round her.

Shirley placed at her disposal £300, and at sight of the money Miss Ainley's eyes filled with joyful tears; for she already saw the hungry fed, the naked clothed, the sick comforted thereby. She quickly drew up a simple, sensible plan for its expenditure; and she assured them brighter times would now come round, for she doubted not the lady of Fieldhead's example would be followed by others: she should try to get additional subscriptions, and to form a fund; but first she must consult the clergy: yes, on that point, she was peremptory: Mr Helstone, Dr Boultby, Mr Hall, *must* be consulted—(for not only must Briarfield be relieved,

but Whinbury and Nunnely)—it would, she averred, be presumption in her to take a single step unauthorised by them.

The clergy were sacred beings in Miss Ainley's eyes: no matter what might be the insignificance of the individual, his station made him holy. The very curates —who, in their trivial arrogance, were hardly worthy to tie her patten strings, or carry her cotton umbrella, or check woollen-shawl—she, in her pure, sincere enthusiasm, looked upon as sucking saints. No matter how clearly their little vices and enormous absurdities were pointed out to her, she could not see them: she was blind to ecclesiastical defects: the white surplice covered a multitude of sins.

Shirley, knowing this harmless infatuation on the part of her recently chosen prime minister, stipulated expressly that the curates were to have no voice in the disposal of the money; that their meddling fingers were not to be inserted into the pie. The rectors, of course, must be paramount, and they might be trusted: they had some experience, some sagacity, and Mr Hall, at least, had sympathy and loving-kindness for his fellow-men; but as for the youth under them, they must be set aside, kept down, and taught that subordination and silence best became their years and capacity.

It was with some horror Miss Ainley heard this language: Caroline, however, interposing with a mild word or two in praise of Mr Sweeting, calmed her again. Sweeting was, indeed, her own favourite: she endeavoured to respect Messrs Malone and Donne; but the slices of sponge-cake, and glasses of cowslip or primrose wine, she had at different times administered to Sweeting, when he came to see her in her little cottage, were ever offered with sentiments of truly motherly regard. The same innocuous collation she had once presented to Malone; but that personage evinced such

open scorn of the offering, she had never ventured to renew it. To Donne she always served the treat, and was happy to see his approbation of it proved beyond a doubt, by the fact of his usually eating two pieces of cake, and putting a third in his pocket.

Indefatigable in her exertions where good was to be done, Miss Ainley would immediately have set out on a walk of ten miles round to the three rectors, in order to show her plan, and humbly solicit their approval: but Miss Keeldar interdicted this, and proposed, as an amendment, to collect the clergy in a small select reunion that evening at Fieldhead. Miss Ainley was to meet them, and the plan was to be discussed in full privy council.

Shirley managed to get the senior priesthood together accordingly; and before the old maid's arrival she had, further, talked all the gentlemen into the most charming mood imaginable. She herself had taken in hand Dr Boultby and Mr Helstone. The first was a stubborn old Welshman, hot, opinionated, and obstinate, but withal a man who did a great deal of good, though not without making some noise about it: the latter, we know. She had rather a friendly feeling for both; especially for old Helstone; and it cost her no trouble to be quite delightful to them. She took them round the garden; she gathered them flowers; she was like a kind daughter to them. Mr Hall she left to Caroline —or rather, it was to Caroline's care Mr Hall consigned himself.

He generally sought Caroline in every party where she and he happened to be. He was not generally a lady's man, though all ladies liked him: something of a book-worm he was, near-sighted, spectacled, now and then abstracted. To old ladies he was kind as a son. To men of every occupation and grade he was acceptable: the truth, simplicity, frankness of his

manners, the nobleness of his integrity, the reality and elevation of his piety, won him friends in every grade: his poor clerk and sexton delighted in him; the noble patron of his living esteemed him highly. It was only with young, handsome, fashionable, and stylish ladies he felt a little shy: being himself a plain man—plain in aspect, plain in manners, plain in speech—he seemed to fear their dash, elegance, and airs. But Miss Helstone had neither dash nor airs, and her native elegance was of a very quiet order—quiet as the beauty of a ground-loving hedge-flower. He was a fluent, cheerful, agreeable talker. Caroline could talk, too, in a *tête-à-tête*: she liked Mr Hall to come and take the seat next her in a party, and thus secure her from Peter Augustus Malone, Joseph Donne, or John Sykes; and Mr Hall never failed to avail himself of this privilege when he possibly could. Such preference shown by a single gentleman to a single lady would certainly, in ordinary cases, have set in motion the tongues of the gossips; but Cyril Hall was forty-five years old, slightly bald and slightly grey, and nobody ever said or thought he was likely to be married to Miss Helstone. Nor did he think so himself: he was wedded already to his books and his parish: his kind sister Margaret, spectacled and learned like himself, made him happy in his single state; he considered it too late to change. Besides, he had known Caroline as a pretty little girl: she had sat on his knee many a time; he had bought her toys and given her books; he felt that her friendship for him was mixed with a sort of filial respect; he could not have brought himself to attempt to give another colour to her sentiments, and his serene mind could glass a fair image without feeling its depths troubled by the reflection.

When Miss Ainley arrived, she was made kindly welcome by every one: Mrs Pryor and Margaret Hall

made room for her on the sofa between them; and when the three were seated, they formed a trio which the gay and thoughtless would have scorned, indeed, as quite worthless and unattractive—a middle-aged widow and two plain spectacled old maids—yet which had its own quiet value, as many a suffering and friendless human being knew.

Shirley opened the business and showed the plan.

"I know the hand which drew up that," said Mr Hall, glancing at Miss Ainley, and smiling benignantly: his approbation was won at once. Boultby heard and deliberated with bent brow and protruded under lip: his consent he considered too weighty to be given in a hurry. Helstone glanced sharply round with an alert, suspicious expression, as if he apprehended that female craft was at work, and that something in petticoats was somehow trying underhand to acquire too much influence, and make itself of too much importance. Shirley caught and comprehended the expression—"This scheme is nothing," said she carelessly; "it is only an outline—a mere suggestion; you, gentlemen, are requested to draw up rules of your own."

And she directly fetched her writing-case, smiling queerly to herself as she bent over the table where it stood: she produced a sheet of paper, a new pen, drew an arm-chair to the table, and presenting her hand to old Helstone, begged permission to instal him in it. For a minute he was a little stiff, and stood wrinkling his copper-coloured forehead strangely. At last he muttered—"Well, you are neither my wife nor my daughter, so I'll be led for once; but mind—I know I *am* led: your little female manœuvres don't blind me."

"Oh!" said Shirley, dipping the pen in the ink, and putting it into his hand, "you must regard me as Captain Keeldar to-day. This is quite a gentleman's affair—yours and mine entirely, Doctor" (so she had

dubbed the Rector). "The ladies there are only to be our aides-de-camp, and at their peril they speak, till we have settled the whole business."

He smiled a little grimly, and began to write. He soon interrupted himself to ask questions, and consult his brethren, disdainfully lifting his glance over the curly heads of the two girls, and the demure caps of the elder ladies, to meet the winking glasses and grey pates of the priests. In the discussion which ensued, all three gentlemen, to their infinite credit, showed a thorough acquaintance with the poor of their parishes,—an even minute knowledge of their separate wants. Each rector knew where clothing was needed, where food would be most acceptable, where money could be bestowed with a probability of it being judiciously laid out. Wherever their memories fell short, Miss Ainley or Miss Hall, if applied to, could help them out; but both ladies took care not to speak unless spoken to. Neither of them wanted to be foremost, but each sincerely desired to be useful, and useful the clergy consented to make them: with which boon they were content.

Shirley stood behind the rectors, leaning over their shoulders now and then to glance at the rules drawn up, and the list of cases making out, listening to all they said, and still at intervals smiling her queer smile—a smile not ill-natured, but significant: too significant to be generally thought amiable. Men rarely like such of their fellows as read their inward nature too clearly and truly. It is good for women, especially, to be endowed with a soft blindness: to have mild, dim eyes, that never penetrate below the surface of things—that take all for what it seems: thousands, knowing this, keep their eyelids drooped, on system; but the most downcast glance has its loophole, through which it can, on occasion, take its sentinel-survey of life. I remember once seeing a pair of blue eyes, that were usually thought

sleepy, secretly on the alert, and I knew by their expression—an expression which chilled my blood, it was in that quarter so wondrously unexpected—that for years they had been accustomed to silent soul-reading. The world called the owner of these blue eyes "bonne petite femme" (she was not an Englishwoman): I learned her nature afterwards—got it off by heart—studied it in its farthest, most hidden recesses—she was the finest, deepest, subtlest schemer in Europe.

When all was at length settled to Miss Keeldar's mind, and the clergy had entered so fully into the spirit of her plans as to head the subscription-list with their signatures for £50 each, she ordered supper to be served; having previously directed Mrs Gill to exercise her utmost skill in the preparation of this repast. Mr Hall was no bon-vivant: he was naturally an abstemious man, indifferent to luxury; but Boultby and Helstone both liked good cookery; the recherché supper consequently put them into excellent humour: they did justice to it, though in a gentlemanly way—not in the mode Mr Donne would have done, had he been present. A glass of fine wine was likewise tasted, with discerning though most decorous relish. Captain Keeldar was complimented on his taste; the compliment charmed him: it had been his aim to gratify and satisfy his priestly guests: he had succeeded, and was radiant with glee.

Chapter xb.

MR DONNE'S EXODUS.

THE next day Shirley expressed to Caroline how delighted she felt that the little party had gone off so well.

"I rather like to entertain a circle of gentlemen,"

said she; "it is amusing to observe how they enjoy a judiciously concocted repast. For ourselves, you see, these choice wines and these scientific dishes are of no importance to us; but gentlemen seem to retain something of the naïveté of children about food, and one likes to please them: that is, when they show the becoming, decent self-government of our admirable rectors. I watch Moore sometimes, to try and discover how he can be pleased; but he has not that child's simplicity about him. Did you ever find out his accessible point, Caroline? You have seen more of him than I."

"It is not, at any rate, that of my uncle and Dr Boultby," returned Caroline, smiling. She always felt a sort of shy pleasure in following Miss Keeldar's lead respecting the discussion of her cousin's character: left to herself, she would never have touched on the subject; but when invited, the temptation of talking about him of whom she was ever thinking was irresistible. "But," she added, "I really don't know what it is; for I never watched Robert in my life but my scrutiny was presently baffled by finding he was watching me."

"There it is!" exclaimed Shirley: "you can't fix your eyes on him but his presently flash on you. He is never off his guard: he won't give you an advantage: even when he does not look at you, his thoughts seem to be busy amongst your own thoughts, tracing your words and actions to their source, contemplating your motives at his ease. Oh! I know that sort of character, or something in the same style: it is one that piques me singularly—how does it affect you?"

This question was a specimen of one of Shirley's sharp, sudden turns: Caroline used to be fluttered by them at first, but she had now got into the way of parrying these home-thrusts like a little Quakeress.

"Pique you? In what way does it pique you?" she said.

"Here he comes!" suddenly exclaimed Shirley' breaking off, starting up and running to the window. "Here comes a diversion. I never told you of a superb conquest I have made lately—made at those parties to which I can never persuade you to accompany me; and the thing has been done without effort or intention on my part: that I aver. There is the bell—and, by all that's delicious! there are two of them. Do they never hunt, then, except in couples? You may have one, Lina, and you may take your choice: I hope I am generous enough. Listen to Tartar!"

The black-muzzled, tawny dog, a glimpse of which was seen in the chapter which first introduced its mistress to the reader, here gave tongue in the hall, amidst whose hollow space the deep bark resounded formidably. A growl, more terrible than the bark—menacing as muttered thunder—succeeded.

"Listen!" again cried Shirley, laughing. "You would think that the prelude to a bloody onslaught: they will be frightened: they don't know old Tartar as I do: they are not aware his uproars are all sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Some bustle was heard. "Down, sir!—down!" exclaimed a high-toned, imperious voice, and then came a crack of a cane or whip. Immediately there was a yell—a scutter—a run—a positive tumult.

"Oh! Malone! Malone!"

"Down! down! down!" cried the high voice.

"He really is worrying them!" exclaimed Shirley. "They have struck him: a blow is what he is not used to, and will not take."

Out she ran—a gentleman was fleeing up the oak staircase, making for refuge in the gallery or chambers in hot haste; another was backing fast to the stair-foot, wildly flourishing a knotty stick, at the same time reiterating, "Down! down! down!" while the tawny

dog bayed, bellowed, howled at him, and a group of servants came bundling from the kitchen. The dog made a spring: the second gentleman turned tail and rushed after his comrade: the first was already safe in a bedroom: he held the door against his fellow;—nothing so merciless as terror;—but the other fugitive struggled hard: the door was about to yield to his strength.

"Gentlemen," was uttered in Miss Keeldar's silvery but vibrating tones, "spare my locks, if you please. Calm yourselves!—come down! Look at Tartar,—he won't harm a cat."

She was caressing the said Tartar: he lay crouched at her feet, his fore-paws stretched out, his tail still in threatening agitation, his nostrils snorting, his bulldog eyes conscious of a dull fire. He was an honest, phlegmatic, stupid, but stubborn canine character: he loved his mistress, and John—the man who fed him—but was mostly indifferent to the rest of the world: quiet enough he was, unless struck or threatened with a stick, and that put a demon into him at once.

"Mr Malone, how do you do?" continued Shirley, lifting up her mirth-lit face to the gallery. "That is not the way to the oak-parlour: that is Mrs Pryor's apartment. Request your friend Mr Donne to evacuate: I shall have the greatest pleasure in receiving him in a lower room."

"Ha! ha!" cried Malone, in hollow laughter, quitting the door, and leaning over the massive balustrade. "Really that animal alarmed Donne. He is a little timid," he proceeded, stiffening himself, and walking trimly to the stairhead. "I thought it better to follow, in order to reassure him."

"It appears you did: well, come down, if you please. John" (turning to her manservant), "go upstairs and liberate Mr Donne. Take care, Mr Malone, the stairs are slippery."

In truth they were; being of polished oak. The caution came a little late for Malone: he had slipped already in his stately descent, and was only saved from falling by a clutch at the banisters, which made the whole structure creak again.

Tartar seemed to think the visitor's descent effected with unwarranted éclat, and accordingly he growled once more. Malone, however, was no coward: the spring of the dog had taken him by surprise: but he passed him now in suppressed fury rather than fear: if a look could have strangled Tartar, he would have breathed no more. Forgetting politeness, in his sullen rage, Malone pushed into the parlour before Miss Keeldar. He glanced at Miss Helstone; he could scarcely bring himself to bend to her. He glared on both the ladies: he looked as if, had either of them been his wife, he would have made a glorious husband at the moment: in each hand he seemed as if he would have liked to clutch one and gripe her to death.

However, Shirley took pity: she ceased to laugh; and Caroline was too true a lady to smile even at any one under mortification. Tartar was dismissed; Peter Augustus was soothed: for Shirley had looks and tones that might soothe a very bull: he had sense to feel that, since he could not challenge the owner of the dog, he had better be civil; and civil he tried to be; and his attempts being well received, he grew presently *very* civil and quite himself again. He had come, indeed, for the express purpose of making himself charming and fascinating: rough portents had met him on his first admission to Fieldhead; but that passage got over, charming and fascinating he resolved to be. Like March, having come in like a lion, he purposed to go out like a lamb.

For the sake of air, as it appeared, or perhaps for that of ready exit in case of some new emergency

arising, he took his seat—not on the sofa, where Miss Keeldar offered him enthronisation, nor yet near the fireside, to which Caroline, by a friendly sign, gently invited him,—but on a chair close to the door. Being no longer sullen or furious, he grew, after his fashion, constrained and embarrassed. He talked to the ladies by fits and starts, choosing for topics whatever was most intensely commonplace: he sighed deeply, significantly, at the close of every sentence; he sighed in each pause; he sighed ere he opened his mouth. At last, finding it desirable to add ease to his other charms, he drew forth to aid him an ample silk pocket-handkerchief. This was to be the graceful toy with which his unoccupied hands were to trifle. He went to work with a certain energy: he folded the red and yellow square cornerwise; he whipped it open with a waft: again he folded it in narrower compass: he made of it a handsome band. To what purpose would he proceed to apply the ligature? Would he wrap it about his throat—his head? Should it be a comforter or a turban? Neither. Peter Augustus had an inventive—an original genius: he was about to show the ladies graces of action possessing at least the charm of novelty. He sat on the chair with his athletic Irish legs crossed, and these legs, in that attitude, he circled with the bandanna and bound firmly together. It was evident he felt this device to be worth an encore: he repeated it more than once. The second performance sent Shirley to the window to laugh her silent but irrepressible laugh unseen: it turned Caroline's head aside, that her long curls might screen the smile mantling on her features. Miss Helstone, indeed, was amused by more than one point in Peter's demeanour: she was edified at the complete though abrupt diversion of his homage from herself to the heiress: the £5000 he supposed her likely one day to

inherit, were not to be weighed in the balance against Miss Keeldar's estate and hall. He took no pains to conceal his calculations and tactics: he pretended to no gradual change of views: he wheeled about at once: the pursuit of the lesser fortune was openly relinquished for that of the greater. On what grounds he expected to succeed in his chase, himself best knew: certainly not by skilful management.

From the length of time that elapsed, it appeared that John had some difficulty in persuading Mr Donne to descend. At length, however, that gentleman appeared: nor, as he presented himself at the oak-parlour door, did he seem in the slightest degree ashamed or confused—not a whit. Donne, indeed, was of that coldly phlegmatic, immovably complacent, densely self-satisfied nature which is insensible to shame. He had never blushed in his life: no humiliation could abash him: his nerves were not capable of sensation enough to stir his life, and make colour mount to his cheek: he had no fire in his blood, and no modesty in his soul: he was a frontless, arrogant, decorous slip of the commonplace; conceited, inane, insipid: and this gentleman had a notion of wooing Miss Keeldar! He knew no more, however, how to set about the business than if he had been an image carved in wood: he had no idea of a taste to be pleased, a heart to be reached in courtship: his notion was, when he should have formally visited her a few times, to write a letter proposing marriage; then he calculated she would accept him for love of his office, then they would be married, then he should be master of Fieldhead, and he should live very comfortably, have servants at his command, eat and drink of the best, and be a great man. You would not have suspected his intentions when he addressed his intended bride in an impertinent, injured tone—"A very dangerous dog that, Miss

Keeldar. I wonder you should keep such an animal."

"Do you, Mr Donne? Perhaps you will wonder more when I tell you I am very fond of him."

"I should say you are not serious in the assertion. Can't fancy a lady fond of that brute—'tis so ugly—a mere carter's dog—pray hang him."

"Hang what I am fond of!"

"And purchase in his stead some sweetly pooty pug or poodle: something appropriate to the fair sex: ladies generally like lapdogs."

"Perhaps I am an exception."

"Oh! you can't be, you know. All ladies are alike in those matters: that is universally allowed."

"Tartar frightened you terribly, Mr Donne. I hope you won't take any harm."

"That I shall, no doubt. He gave me a turn I shall not soon forget. When I *sor* him" (such was Mr Donne's pronunciation) "about to spring, I thought I should have fainted."

"Perhaps you did faint in the bed-room—you were a long time there?"

"No; I bore up that I might hold the door fast: I was determined not to let any one enter: I thought I would keep a barrier between me and the enemy."

"But what if your friend Mr Malone had been worried?"

"Malone must take care of himself. Your man persuaded me to come out at last by saying the dog was chained up in his kennel: if I had not been assured of this, I would have remained all day in the chamber. But what is that? I declare the man has told a falsehood! The dog is there!"

And indeed Tartar walked past the glass-door opening to the garden, stiff, tawny, and black-muzzled as ever. He still seemed in bad humour; he was growling

again, and whistling a half-strangled whistle, being an inheritance from the bull-dog side of his ancestry.

"There are other visitors coming," observed Shirley, with that provoking coolness which the owners of formidable-looking dogs are apt to show while their animals are all bristle and bay. Tartar sprang down the pavement towards the gate, bellowing "avec explosion." His mistress quietly opened the glass-door, and stepped out chirruping to him. His bellow was already silenced, and he was lifting up his huge, blunt, stupid head to the new callers to be patted.

"What—Tartar, Tartar!" said a cheery, rather boyish voice: "don't you know us? Good-morning, old boy!"

And little Mr Sweeting, whose conscious good-nature made him comparatively fearless of man, woman, child, or brute, came through the gate, caressing the guardian. His vicar, Mr Hall, followed: he had no fear of Tartar either, and Tartar had no ill-will to him: he snuffed both the gentlemen round, and then, as if concluding that they were harmless, and might be allowed to pass, he withdrew to the sunny front of the hall, leaving the archway free. Mr Sweeting followed, and would have played with him, but Tartar took no notice of his caresses: it was only his mistress's hand whose touch gave him pleasure; to all others he showed himself obstinately insensible.

Shirley advanced to meet Messrs Hall and Sweeting, shaking hands with them cordially: they were come to tell her of certain successes they had achieved that morning in applications for subscriptions to the fund. Mr Hall's eyes beamed benignantly through his spectacles: his plain face looked positively handsome with goodness, and when Caroline, seeing who was come, ran out to meet him, and put both her hands into his, he gazed down on her with a gentle, serene, affectionate

expression, that gave him the aspect of a smiling Melancthon.

Instead of re-entering the house, they strayed through the garden, the ladies walking one on each side of Mr Hall. It was a breezy sunny day; the air freshened the girls' cheeks, and gracefully dishevelled their ringlets: both of them looked pretty,—one, gay: Mr Hall spoke oftenest to his brilliant companion, looked most frequently at the quiet one. Miss Keeldar gathered handfuls of the profusely blooming flowers, whose perfume filled the enclosure; she gave some to Caroline, telling her to choose a nosegay for Mr Hall; and with her lap filled with delicate and splendid blossoms, Caroline sat down on the steps of a summer-house: the Vicar stood near her, leaning on his cane.

Shirley, who could not be inhospitable, now called out the neglected pair in the oak-parlour: she convoyed Donne past his dread enemy Tartar, who, with his nose on his fore-paws, lay snoring under the meridian sun. Donne was not grateful: he never *was* grateful for kindness and attention; but he was glad of the safeguard. Miss Keeldar, desirous of being impartial, offered the curates flowers: they accepted them with native awkwardness. Malone seemed specially at a loss, when a bouquet filled one hand, while his shillelagh occupied the other. Donne's "Thank you!" was rich to hear: it was the most fatuous and arrogant of sounds, implying that he considered this offering an homage to his merits, and an attempt on the part of the heiress to ingratiate herself into his priceless affections. Sweeting alone received the posy like a smart, sensible, little man, as he was; putting it gallantly and nattily into his button-hole.

As a reward for his good manners, Miss Keeldar beckoning him apart, gave him some commission, which made his eyes sparkle with glee. Away he flew,

round by the courtyard to the kitchen: no need to give him directions; he was always at home everywhere. Erelong he re-appeared, carrying a round table, which he placed under the cedar; then he collected six garden-chairs from various nooks and bowers in the grounds, and placed them in a circle. The parlour-maid—Miss Keeldar kept no footman—came out, bearing a napkin-covered tray. Sweeting's nimble fingers aided in disposing glasses, plates, knives and forks: he assisted her too in setting forth a neat luncheon, consisting of cold chicken, ham, and tarts.

This sort of impromptu regale, it was Shirley's delight to offer any chance guests: and nothing pleased her better than to have an alert, obliging little friend, like Sweeting, to run about her hand, cheerily receive and briskly execute her hospitable hints. David and she were on the best terms in the world; and his devotion to the heiress was quite disinterested, since it prejudiced in nothing his faithful allegiance to the magnificent Dora Sykes.

The repast turned out a very merry one. Donne and Malone, indeed, contributed but little to its vivacity, the chief part they played in it being what concerned the knife, fork, and wine-glass; but where four such natures as Mr Hall, David Sweeting, Shirley, and Caroline, were assembled in health and amity, on a green lawn, under a sunny sky, amidst a wilderness of flowers, there could not be ungenial dulness.

In the course of conversation, Mr Hall reminded the ladies that Whitsuntide was approaching, when the grand United Sunday-School tea-drinking and procession of the three parishes of Briarfield, Whinbury, and Nunnely were to take place. Caroline he knew would be at her post as teacher, he said, and he hoped Miss Keeldar would not be wanting: he hoped she would make her first public appearance amongst them at that

time. Shirley was not the person to miss an occasion of this sort; she liked festive excitement, a gathering of happiness, a concentration and combination of pleasant details, a throng of glad faces, a muster of elated hearts: she told Mr Hall they might count on her with security: she did not know what she would have to do, but they might dispose of her as they pleased.

"And," said Caroline, "you will promise to come to my table, and to sit near me, Mr Hall?"

"I shall not fail, Deo volente," said he. "I have occupied the place on her right hand at these monster tea-drinkings for the last six years," he proceeded, turning to Miss Keeldar. "They made her a Sunday-school teacher when she was a little girl of twelve: she is not particularly self-confident by nature, as you may have observed; and the first time she had to 'take a tray,' as the phrase is, and make tea in public, there was some piteous trembling and flushing. I observed the speechless panic, the cups shaking in the little hand, and the overflowing tea-pot filled too full from the urn. I came to her aid, took a seat near her, managed the urn and the slop-basin, and in fact made the tea for her like any old woman."

"I was very grateful to you," interposed Caroline.

"You were: you told me so with an earnest sincerity that repaid me well; inasmuch as it was not like the majority of little ladies of twelve, whom you may help and caress for ever without their evincing any quicker sense of the kindness done and meant than if they were made of wax and wood, instead of flesh and nerves. She kept close to me, Miss Keeldar, the rest of the evening, walking with me over the grounds where the children were playing; she followed me into the vestry when all were summoned into church: she would, I believe, have mounted with me to the pulpit, had I not taken the previous precaution of conducting her to the Rectory-pew."

"And he has been my friend ever since," said Caroline.

"And always sat at her table, near her tray, and handed the cups,—that is the extent of my services. The next thing I do for her will be to marry her some day to some curate or mill-owner: but mind, Caroline, I shall inquire about the bridegroom's character, and if he is not a gentleman likely to render happy the little girl who walked with me hand in hand over Nunnely Common, I will not officiate: so take care."

"The caution is useless: I am not going to be married. I shall live single like your sister Margaret, Mr Hall."

"Very well—you might do worse—Margaret is not unhappy: she has her books for a pleasure, and her brother for a care, and is content. If ever you want a home; if the day should come when Briarfield Rectory is yours no longer, come to Nunnely Vicarage. Should the old maid and bachelor be still living, they will make you tenderly welcome."

"There are your flowers. Now," said Caroline, who had kept the nosegay she had selected for him till this moment, "*you* don't care for a bouquet, but you must give it to Margaret: only—to be sentimental for once—keep that little forget-me-not, which is a wild-flower I gathered from the grass; and—to be still more sentimental—let me take two or three of the blue blossoms and put them in my souvenir."

And she took out a small book with enamelled cover and silver clasp, wherein, having opened it, she inserted the flowers, writing round them in pencil—"To be kept for the sake of the Rev. Cyril Hall, my friend. May —, 18—."

The Rev. Cyril Hall, on his part also, placed a sprig in safety between the leaves of a pocket Testament: he only wrote on the margin—"Caroline."

"Now," said he, smiling, "I trust we are romantic enough. Miss Keeldar," he continued (the curates, by-the-bye, during this conversation, were too much occupied with their own jokes to notice what passed at the other end of the table), "I hope you are laughing at this trait of '*exaltation*' in the old grey-headed Vicar; but the fact is, I am so used to comply with the requests of this young friend of yours, I don't know how to refuse her when she tells me to do anything. You would say it is not much in my way to traffic with flowers and forget-me-nots: but, you see, when requested to be sentimental, I am obedient."

"He is naturally rather sentimental," remarked Caroline; "Margaret told me so, and I know what pleases him."

"That you should be good and happy? Yes; that is one of my greatest pleasures. May God long preserve to you the blessings of peace and innocence! By which phrase, I mean *comparative* innocence; for in His sight, I am well aware, *none* are pure. What, to our human perceptions, looks spotless as we fancy angels, is to Him but frailty, needing the blood of His Son to cleanse, and the strength of His Spirit to sustain. Let us each and all cherish humility—I, as you, my young friends; and we may well do it when we look into our own hearts, and see there temptations, inconsistencies, propensities, even we blush to recognise. And it is not youth, nor good looks, nor grace, nor any gentle outside charm which makes either beauty or goodness in God's eyes. Young ladies, when your mirror or men's tongues flatter you, remember that, in the sight of her Maker, Mary Ann Ainley—a woman whom neither glass nor lips have ever panegyrised—is fairer and better than either of you. She is, indeed," he added, after a pause—"she is, indeed. You young things—wrapt up in yourselves and in earthly hopes—

scarcely live as Christ lived: perhaps you cannot do it yet, while existence is so sweet and earth so smiling to you; it would be too much to expect: she, with meek heart and due reverence, treads close in her Redeemer's steps."

Here the harsh voice of Donne broke in on the mild tones of Mr Hall—"Ahem!" he began, clearing his throat evidently for a speech of some importance. "Ahem! Miss Keeldar, your attention an instant, if you please."

"Well," said Shirley nonchalantly. "What is it? I listen: all of me is ear that is not eye."

"I hope part of you is hand also," returned Donne, in his vulgarly presumptuous and familiar style, "and part purse: it is to the hand and purse I propose to appeal. I came here this morning with a view to beg of you"——

"You should have gone to Mrs Gill: she is my almoner."

"To beg of you a subscription to a school. I and Dr Boultby intend to erect one in the hamlet of Ecclefigg, which is under our vicarage of Whinbury. The Baptists have got possession of it: they have a chapel there, and we want to dispute the ground."

"But I have nothing to do with Ecclefigg: I possess no property there."

"What does that signify? You're a Churchwoman, ain't you?"

"Admirable creature!" muttered Shirley, under her breath: "exquisite address: fine style! What raptures he excites in me!" Then aloud, "I am a Churchwoman, certainly."

"Then you can't refuse to contribute in this case. The population of Ecclefigg are a parcel of brutes—we want to civilise them."

"Who is to be the missionary?"

"Myself, probably."

"You won't fail through lack of sympathy with your flock."

"I hope not—I expect success; but we must have money. There is the paper—pray give a handsome sum."

When asked for money, Shirley rarely held back. She put down her name for £5: after the £300 she had lately given, and the many smaller sums she was giving constantly, it was as much as she could at present afford. Donne looked at it, declared the subscription "shabby," and clamorously demanded more. Miss Keeldar flushed up with some indignation and more astonishment.

"At present I shall give no more," said she.

"Not give more! Why, I expected you to head the list with a cool hundred. With your property, you should never put down a signature for less."

She was silent.

"In the south," went on Donne, "a lady with a thousand a year would be ashamed to give five pounds for a public object."

Shirley, so rarely haughty, looked so now. Her slight frame became nerved; her distinguished face quickened with scorn.

"Strange remarks!" said she: "most inconsiderate! Reproach in return for bounty is misplaced."

"Bounty! Do you call five pounds bounty?"

"I do: and bounty which, had I not given it to Dr Boultby's intended school, of the erection of which I approve, and in no sort to his curate, who seems ill-advised in his manner of applying for—or rather extorting subscriptions,—bounty, I repeat, which, but for this consideration, I should instantly reclaim."

Donne was thick-skinned: he did not feel all or half that the tone, air, glance of the speaker expressed: he knew not on what ground he stood.

"Wretched place—this Yorkshire," he went on. "I could never have formed an idea*r* of the country had I not seen it; and the people—rich and poor—what a set! How *corse* and uncultivated! They would be scouted in the south."

Shirley leaned forwards on the table, her nostrils dilating a little, her taper fingers interlaced and compressing each other hard.

"The rich," pursued the infatuated and unconscious Donne, "are a parcel of misers—never living as persons with their incomes ought to live: you scarsley"—(you must excuse Mr Donne's pronunciation, reader; it was very choice; he considered it genteel, and prided himself on his southern accent; northern ears received with singular sensations his utterance of certain words); "you scarsley ever see a fam'ly where a propa carriage or a reg'la butla is kep; and as to the poor—just look at them when they come crowding about the church-doors on the occasion of a marriage or a funeral, clattering in clogs; the men in their shirt-sleeves and wool-combers' aprons, the women in mob-caps and bed-gowns. They pos'tively deserve that one should turn a mad cow in amongst them to rout their rabble-ranks—he! he! What fun it would be!"

"There,—you have reached the climax," said Shirley quietly. "You have reached the climax," she repeated, turning her glowing glance towards him. "You cannot go beyond it, and," she added with emphasis, "you *shall* not, in my house."

Up she rose: nobody could control her now, for she was exasperated; straight she walked to her garden-gates, wide she flung them open.

"Walk through," she said austerely, "and pretty quickly, and set foot on this pavement no more."

Donne was astounded. He had thought all the time he was showing himself off to high advantage, as a lofty-

souled person of the first "ton;" he imagined he was producing a crushing impression. Had he not expressed disdain of everything in Yorkshire? What more conclusive proof could be given that he was better than anything there? And yet here was he about to be turned like a dog out of a Yorkshire garden! Where, under such circumstances, was the "concatenation accordingly?"

"Rid me of you instantly—instantly!" reiterated Shirley, as he lingered.

"Madam—a clergyman! Turn out a clergyman?"

"Off! Were you an archbishop you have proved yourself no gentleman, and must go. Quick!"

She was quite resolved: there was no trifling with her: besides, Tartar was again rising; he perceived symptoms of a commotion: he manifested a disposition to join in; there was evidently nothing for it but to go, and Donne made his Exodus; the heiress sweeping him a deep curtsey as she closed the gates on him.

"How dare the pompous priest abuse his flock? How dare the lisping cockney revile Yorkshire?" was her sole observation on the circumstance, as she returned to the table.

Erelong, the little party broke up: Miss Keeldar's ruffled and darkened brow, curled lip, and incensed eye, gave no invitation to further social enjoyment.

Chapter xvi.

WHITSUNTIDE.

THE fund prospered. By dint of Miss Keeldar's example, the three rectors' vigorous exertions, and the efficient though quiet aid of their spinster and spectacled lieutenants, Mary Ann Ainley

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and Margaret Hall, a handsome sum was raised; and this being judiciously managed, served for the present greatly to alleviate the distress of the unemployed poor. The neighbourhood seemed to grow calmer: for a fortnight past no cloth had been destroyed; no outrage on mill or mansion had been committed in the three parishes. Shirley was sanguine that the evil she wished to avert was almost escaped; that the threatened storm was passing over: with the approach of summer she felt certain that trade would improve—it always did; and then this weary war could not last for ever: peace must return one day: with peace what an impulse would be given to commerce!

Such was the usual tenor of her observations to her tenant, Gérard Moore, whenever she met him where they could converse, and Moore would listen very quietly—too quietly to satisfy her. She would then by her impatient glance demand something more from him—some explanation, or at least some additional remark. Smiling in his way, with that expression which gave a remarkable cast of sweetness to his mouth, while his brow remained grave, he would answer to the effect, that himself, too, trusted in the finite nature of the war; that it was indeed on that ground the anchor of his hopes was fixed: thereon his speculations depended. "For you are aware," he would continue, "that I now work Hollow's Mill entirely on speculation: I sell nothing; there is no market for my goods. I manufacture for a future day: I make myself ready to take advantage of the first opening that shall occur. Three months ago this was impossible to me; I had exhausted both credit and capital: you well know who came to my rescue; from what hand I received the loan which saved me. It is on the strength of that loan I am enabled to continue the bold game which, a while since, I feared I should never play more. Total ruin I

know will follow loss, and I am aware that gain is doubtful; but I am quite cheerful: so long as I can be active, so long as I can strive, so long, in short, as my hands are not tied, it is impossible for me to be depressed. One year, nay, but six months of the reign of the olive, and I am safe; for, as you say, peace will give an impulse to commerce. In this you are right; but as to the restored tranquillity of the neighbourhood —as to the permanent good effect of your charitable fund —I doubt. Eleemosynary relief never yet tranquillised the working-classes—it never made them grateful; it is not in human nature that it should. I suppose, were all things ordered aright, they ought not to be in a position to need that humiliating relief; and this they feel: we should feel it were we so placed. Besides, to whom should they be grateful? To you—to the clergy perhaps, but not to us mill-owners. They hate us worse than ever. Then, the disaffected here are in correspondence with the disaffected elsewhere: Nottingham is one of their headquarters, Manchester another, Birmingham a third. The subalterns receive orders from their chiefs; they are in a good state of discipline: no blow is struck without mature deliberation. In sultry weather, you have seen the sky threaten thunder day by day, and yet night after night the clouds have cleared, and the sun has set quietly; but the danger was not gone, it was only delayed: the long-threatening storm is sure to break at last. There is analogy between the moral and physical atmosphere."

"Well, Mr Moore" (so these conferences always ended), "take care of yourself. If you think that I have ever done you any good, reward me by promising to take care of yourself."

"I do: I will take close and watchful care. I wish to live, not to die: the future opens like Eden before me; and still, when I look deep into the shades of my

paradise, I see a vision, that I like better than seraph or cherub, glide across remote vistas."

"Do you? Pray, what vision?"

"I see"——

The maid came bustling in with the tea-things.

The early part of that May, as we have seen, was fine, the middle was wet; but in the last week, at change of moon, it cleared again. A fresh wind swept off the silver-white, deep-piled rain-clouds, bearing them, mass on mass, to the eastern horizon; on whose verge they dwindled, and behind whose rim they disappeared, leaving the vault behind all pure blue space, ready for the reign of the summer sun. That sun rose broad on Whitsuntide: the gathering of the schools was signalised by splendid weather.

Whit-Tuesday was the great day, in preparation for which the two large schoolrooms of Briarfield, built by the present rector, chiefly at his own expense, were cleaned out, white-washed, repainted, and decorated with flowers and evergreens—some from the Rectory-garden, two cart-loads from Fieldhead, and a wheel-barrowful from the more stingy domain of De Walden, the residence of Mr Wynne. In these schoolrooms twenty tables, each calculated to accommodate twenty guests, were laid out, surrounded with benches, and covered with white cloths: above them were suspended at least some twenty cages, containing as many canaries, according to a fancy of the district, specially cherished by Mr Helstone's clerk, who delighted in the piercing song of these birds, and knew that amidst confusion of tongues they always carolled loudest. These tables, be it understood, were not spread for the twelve hundred scholars to be assembled from the three parishes, but only for the patrons and teachers of the schools: the children's feast was to be spread in the open air. At one o'clock the troops were to come in; at two they

were to be marshalled; till four they were to parade the parish; then came the feast, and afterwards the meeting, with music and speechifying in the church.

Why Briarfield was chosen for the point of rendezvous—the scene of the fête—should be explained. It was not because it was the largest or most populous parish—Whinbury far outdid it in that respect; nor because it was the oldest—antique as were the hoary Church and Rectory, Nunnely's low-roofed Temple and mossy Parsonage, buried both in coëval oaks, outstanding sentinels of Nunnwood, were older still: it was simply because Mr Helstone willed it so, and Mr Helstone's will was stronger than that of Boultby or Hall; the former *could* not, the latter *would* not, dispute a point of precedence with their resolute and imperious brother: they let him lead and rule.

This notable anniversary had always hitherto been a trying day to Caroline Helstone, because it dragged her perforce into public, compelling her to face all that was wealthy, respectable, influential in the neighbourhood; in whose presence, but for the kind countenance of Mr Hall, she would have appeared unsupported. Obliged to be conspicuous; obliged to walk at the head of her regiment as the Rector's niece, and first teacher of the first class; obliged to make tea at the first table for a mixed multitude of ladies and gentlemen; and to do all this without the countenance of mother, aunt, or other chaperon—she, meantime, being a nervous person, who mortally feared publicity—it will be comprehended that, under these circumstances, she trembled at the approach of Whitsuntide.

But this year Shirley was to be with her, and that changed the aspect of the trial singularly—it changed it utterly: it was a trial no longer—it was almost an enjoyment. Miss Keeldar was better in her single self than a host of ordinary friends. Quite self-possessed,

and always spirited and easy; conscious of her social importance, yet never presuming upon it, it would be enough to give one courage only to look at her. The only fear was, lest the heiress should not be punctual to tryst: she often had a careless way of lingering behind time, and Caroline knew her uncle would not wait a second for any one: at the moment of the church-clock tolling two, the bells would clash out and the march begin. She must look after Shirley, then, in this matter, or her expected companion would fail her.

Whit-Tuesday saw her rise almost with the sun. She, Fanny, and Eliza were busy the whole morning arranging the Rectory-parlours in first-rate company order, and setting out a collation of cooling refreshments—wine, fruit, cakes—on the dining-room side-board. Then she had to dress in her freshest and fairest attire of white muslin; the perfect fineness of the day and the solemnity of the occasion warranted, and even exacted, such costume. Her new sash—a birthday present from Margaret Hall, which she had reason to believe Cyril himself had bought, and in return for which she had indeed given him a set of cambric bands in a handsome case—was tied by the dexterous fingers of Fanny, who took no little pleasure in arraying her fair young mistress for the occasion; her simple bonnet had been trimmed to correspond with her sash; her pretty but inexpensive scarf of white crape suited her dress. When ready she formed a picture, not bright enough to dazzle, but fair enough to interest; not brilliantly striking, but very delicately pleasing; a picture in which sweetness of tint, purity of air, and grace of mien, atoned for the absence of rich colouring and magnificent contour. What her brown eye and clear forehead showed of her mind, was in keeping with her dress and face—modest, gentle, and, though pensive, harmonious. It appeared that neither lamb nor dove need fear her, but would

welcome rather, in her look of simplicity and softness, a sympathy with their own natures, or with the natures we ascribe to them.

After all, she was an imperfect, faulty human being; fair enough of form, hue, and array; but, as Cyril Hall said, neither so good nor so great as the withered Miss Ainley, now putting on her best black gown and Quaker-drab shawl and bonnet in her own narrow cottage-chamber.

Away Caroline went, across some very sequestered fields and through some quite hidden lanes, to Fieldhead. She glided quickly under the green hedges and across the greener leas. There was no dust—no moisture—to soil the hem of her stainless garment, or to damp her slender sandal: after the late rains all was clean, and under the present glowing sun all was dry: she walked fearlessly, then, on daisy and turf, and through thick plantations; she reached Fieldhead and penetrated to Miss Keeldar's dressing-room.

It was well she had come, or Shirley would have been too late. Instead of making ready with all speed, she lay stretched on a couch, absorbed in reading: Mrs Pryor stood near, vainly urging her to rise and dress. Caroline wasted no words: she immediately took the book from her, and with her own hands commenced the business of disrobing and rerobing her. Shirley, indolent with the heat, and gay with her youth and pleasurable nature, wanted to talk, laugh and linger; but Caroline, intent on being in time, persevered in dressing her as fast as fingers could fasten strings or insert pins. At length, as she united a final row of hooks and eyes, she found leisure to chide her, saying she was very naughty to be so unpunctual; that she looked even now the picture of incorrigible carelessness: and so Shirley did—but a very lovely picture of that tiresome quality.

She presented quite a contrast to Caroline: there was style in every fold of her dress and every line of her figure: the rich silk suited her better that a simpler costume; the deep embroidered scarf became her: she wore it negligently, but gracefully; the wreath on her bonnet crowned her well: the attention to fashion, the tasteful appliance of ornament in each portion of her dress, were quite in place with her: all this suited her, like the frank light in her eyes, the rallying smile about her lips, like her shaft-straight carriage and lightsome step. Caroline took her hand when she was dressed, hurried her downstairs, out of doors, and thus they sped through the fields, laughing as they went, and looking very much like a snow-white dove and gem-tinted bird-of-paradise joined in social flight.

Thanks to Miss Helstone's promptitude, they arrived in good time. While yet trees hid the church, they heard the bell tolling a measured but urgent summons for all to assemble; the trooping in of numbers, the trampling of many steps, and murmuring of many voices were likewise audible. From a rising ground they presently saw, on the Whinbury road, the Whinbury school approaching: it numbered five hundred souls. The Rector and Curate, Boultby and Donne, headed it: the former, looming large in full canonicals, walking as became a beneficed priest, under the canopy of a shovel hat, with the dignity of an ample corporation, the embellishment of the squarest and vastest of black coats, and the support of the stoutest of gold-headed canes. As the Doctor walked, he now and then slightly flourished his cane, and inclined his shovel-hat with a dogmatical wag towards his aide-de-camp. That aide-de-camp—Donne, to wit—narrow as the line of his shape was compared to the broad bulk of his principal, contrived, notwithstanding, to look every inch a curate: all about him was pragmatical and self-com-

placent, from his turned-up nose and elevated chin to his clerical black gaiters, his somewhat short, strapless trousers, and his square-toed shoes.

Walk on, Mr Donne! You have undergone scrutiny. You think you look well—whether the white and purple figures watching you from yonder hill think so, is another question.

These figures come running down when the regiment has marched by: the churchyard is full of children and teachers, all in their very best holiday attire: and—distressed as is the district, bad as are the times—it is wonderful to see how respectably—how handsomely even—they have contrived to clothe themselves. That British love of decency will work miracles: the poverty which reduces an Irish girl to rags is impotent to rob the English girl of the neat wardrobe she knows necessary to her self-respect. Besides, the lady of the manor—that Shirley, now gazing with pleasure on this well-dressed and happy-looking crowd—has really done them good: her seasonable bounty consoled many a poor family against the coming holiday, and supplied many a child with a new frock or bonnet for the occasion; she knows it, and is elate with the consciousness: glad that her money, example, and influence have really—substantially—benefited those around her. She cannot be charitable like Miss Ainley—it is not in her nature: it relieves her to feel that there is another way of being charitable, practicable for other characters, and under other circumstances.

Caroline, too, is pleased; for she also has done good in her small way; robbed herself of more than one dress, ribbon, or collar she could ill spare, to aid in fitting out the scholars of her class; and as she could not give money, she has followed Miss Ainley's example, in giving her time and her industry to sew for the children.

Not only is the churchyard full, but the Rectory-garden is also thronged: pairs and parties of ladies and gentlemen are seen walking amongst the waving lilacs and laburnums. The house also is occupied: at the wide-open parlour-windows gay groups are standing. These are the patrons and teachers, who are to swell the procession. In the parson's croft, behind the Rectory, are the musicians of the three parish bands, with their instruments. Fanny and Eliza, in the smartest of caps and gowns, and the whitest of aprons, move amongst them, serving out quarts of ale; whereof a stock was brewed very sound and strong some weeks since, by the Rector's orders, and under his special superintendence. Whatever he had a hand in, must be managed handsomely: "shabby doings," of any description, were not endured under his sanction: from the erection of a public building, a church, school, or court-house, to the cooking of a dinner, he still advocated the lordly, liberal, and effective. Miss Keeldar was like him in this respect, and they mutually approved each other's arrangements.

Caroline and Shirley were soon in the midst of the company; the former met them very easily for her: instead of sitting down in a retired corner, or stealing away to her own room till the procession should be marshalled, according to her wont, she moved through the three parlours, conversed and smiled, absolutely spoke once or twice ere she was spoken to, and, in short, seemed a new creature. It was Shirley's presence which thus transformed her: the view of Miss Keeldar's air and manner did her a world of good. Shirley had no fear of her kind; no tendency to shrink from, to avoid it. All human beings, men, women, or children, whom low breeding or coarse presumption did not render positively offensive, were welcome enough to her: some much more so than others, of

course; but, generally speaking, till a man had indisputably proved himself bad and a nuisance, Shirley was willing to think him good and an acquisition, and to treat him accordingly. This disposition made her a general favourite, for it robbed her very raillery of its sting, and gave her serious or smiling conversation a happy charm: nor did it diminish the value of her intimate friendship, which was a distinct thing from this social benevolence, depending, indeed, on quite a different part of her character. Miss Helstone was the choice of her affection and intellect; the Misses Pearson, Sykes, Wynne, &c., &c., only the profiters by her good-nature and vivacity.

Donne happened to come into the drawing-room while Shirley, sitting on the sofa, formed the centre of a tolerably wide circle. She had already forgotten her exasperation against him, and she bowed and smiled good-humouredly. The disposition of the man was then seen. He knew neither how to decline the advance with dignity, as one whose just pride has been wounded, nor how to meet it with frankness, as one who is glad to forget and forgive; his punishment had impressed him with no sense of shame, and he did not experience that feeling on encountering his chastiser: he was not vigorous enough in evil to be actively malignant—he merely passed by sheepishly with a rated, scowling look. Nothing could ever again reconcile him to his enemy; while no passion of resentment, for even sharper and more ignominious inflictions, could his lymphatic nature know.

"He was not worth a scene!" said Shirley to Caroline. "What a fool I was! To revenge on poor Donne his silly spite at Yorkshire, is something like crushing a gnat for attacking the hide of a rhinoceros. Had I been a gentleman, I believe I should have helped him off the premises by dint of physical force: I am

glad now I only employed the moral weapon. But he must come near me no more: I don't like him: he irritates me: there is not even amusement to be had out of him: Malone is better sport."

It seemed as if Malone wished to justify the preference; for the words were scarcely out of the speaker's mouth, when Peter Augustus came up, all in "grande tenue," gloved and scented, with his hair oiled and brushed to perfection, and bearing in one hand a huge bunch of cabbage roses, five or six in full blow: these he presented to the heiress with a grace to which the most cunning pencil could do but defective justice. And who, after this, could dare to say that Peter was not a lady's man? He had gathered and he had given flowers: he had offered a sentimental—a poetic tribute at the shrine of Love or Mammon. Hercules holding the distaff was but a faint type of Peter bearing the roses. He must have thought this himself, for he seemed amazed at what he had done: he backed without a word; he was going away with a husky chuckle of self-felicitation; then he bethought himself to stop and turn, to ascertain by ocular testimony that he really had presented a bouquet: yes—there were the six red cabbages on the purple satin lap, a very white hand, with some gold rings on the fingers, slightly holding them together, and streaming ringlets, half hiding a laughing face, drooped over them: only *half*-hiding: Peter saw the laugh—it was unmistakable—he was made a joke of—his gallantry, his chivalry were the subject of a jest for a petticoat—for two petticoats—Miss Helstone too was smiling. Moreover, he felt he was seen through, and Peter grew black as a thundercloud. When Shirley looked up, a fell eye was fastened on her: Malone, at least, had energy enough in hate: she saw it in his glance.

"Peter *is* worth a scene, and shall have it, if he likes, one day," she whispered to her friend.

And now—solemn and sombre as to their colour, though bland enough as to their faces—appeared at the dining-room door the three rectors: they had hitherto been busy in the church, and were now coming to take some little refreshment for the body, ere the march commenced. The large morocco-covered easy chair had been left vacant for Dr Boultby; he was put into it, and Caroline, obeying the instigations of Shirley, who told her now was the time to play the hostess, hastened to hand to her uncle's vast, revered, and, on the whole, worthy friend, a glass of wine and a plate of macaroons. Boultby's churchwardens, patrons of the Sunday-school both, as he insisted on their being, were already beside him; Mrs Sykes and the other ladies of his congregation were on his right hand and on his left, expressing their hopes that he was not fatigued, their fears that the day would be too warm for him. Mrs Boultby, who held an opinion that when her lord dropped asleep after a good dinner his face became as the face of an angel, was bending over him, tenderly wiping some perspiration, real or imaginary, from his brow: Boultby, in short, was in his glory, and in a round sound "voix de poitrine," he rumbled out thanks for attentions, and assurances of his tolerable health. Of Caroline he took no manner of notice as she came near, save to accept what she offered; he did not see her, he never did see her: he hardly knew that such a person existed. He saw the macaroons, however, and being fond of sweets, possessed himself of a small handful thereof. The wine Mrs Boultby insisted on mingling with hot water, and qualifying with sugar and nutmeg.

Mr Hall stood near an open window, breathing the fresh air and scent of flowers, and talking like a brother to Miss Ainley. To him Caroline turned her attention with pleasure. "What should she bring him? He must not help himself—he must be served by her;"

and she provided herself with a little salver, that she might offer him variety. Margaret Hall joined them; so did Miss Keeldar: the four ladies stood round their favourite pastor: they also had an idea that they looked on the face of an earthly angel: Cyril Hall was their pope, infallible to them as Dr Thomas Boultby to his admirers. A throng, too, enclosed the Rector of Briarfield: twenty or more pressed round him; and no parson was ever more potent in a circle than old Helstone. The curates, herding together after their manner, made a constellation of three lesser planets: divers young ladies watched them afar off, but ventured not nigh.

Mr Helstone produced his watch. "Ten minutes to two," he announced aloud. "Time for all to fall into line. Come." He seized his shovel-hat and marched away; all rose and followed en masse.

The twelve hundred children were drawn up in three bodies of four hundred souls each: in the rear of each regiment was stationed a band; between every twenty there was an interval, wherein Helstone posted the teachers in pairs: to the van of the armies he summoned—

"Grace Boultby and Mary Sykes lead out Whinbury."

"Margaret Hall and Mary Ann Ainley conduct Nunnely."

"Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar head Briarfield."

Then again he gave command—

"Mr Donne to Whinbury: Mr Sweeting to Nunnely; Mr Malone to Briarfield."

And these gentlemen stepped up before the lady-generals.

The rectors passed to the full front—the parish clerks fell to the extreme rear; Helstone lifted his

shovel-hat; in an instant out clashed the eight bells in the tower, loud swelled the sounding bands, flute spoke and clarion answered, deep rolled the drums, and away they marched.

The broad white road unrolled before the long procession, the sun and sky surveyed it cloudless, the wind tossed the tree-boughs above it, and the twelve hundred children, and one hundred and forty adults, of which it was composed, trod on in time and tune, with gay faces and glad hearts. It was a joyous scene, and a scene to do good: it was a day of happiness for rich and poor: the work, first of God, and then of the clergy. Let England's priests have their due: they are a faulty set in some respects, being only of common flesh and blood, like us all; but the land would be badly off without them: Britain would miss her church, if that church fell. God save it! God also reform it!

Chapter xxij.

THE SCHOOL-FEAST.

NOT on combat bent, nor of foemen in search, was this priest-led and women-officered company: yet their music played martial tunes, and—to judge by the eyes and carriage of some, Miss Keeldar, for instance—these sounds awoke, if not a martial, yet a longing spirit. Old Helstone, turning by chance, looked into her face, and he laughed, and she laughed at him.

"There is no battle in prospect," he said; "our country does not want us to fight for it: no foe or tyrant is questioning or threatening our liberty: there is nothing to be done: we are only taking a walk. Keep your hand on the reins, Captain, and slack the fire of that spirit: it is not wanted; the more's the pity."

"Take your own advice, Doctor," was Shirley's response. To Caroline she murmured, "I'll borrow of imagination what reality will not give me. We are not soldiers—bloodshed is not my desire; or, if we are, we are soldiers of the Cross. Time has rolled back some hundreds of years, and we are bound on a pilgrimage to Palestine. But no,—that is too visionary. I need a sterner dream: we are Lowlanders of Scotland, following a covenanting captain up into the hills to hold a meeting out of the reach of persecuting troopers. We know that battle may follow prayer; and, as we believe that in the worst issue of battle, heaven must be our reward, we are ready and willing to redden the peat-moss with our blood. That music stirs my soul; it wakens all my life; it makes my heart beat: not with its temperate daily pulse, but with a new, thrilling vigour. I almost long for danger; for a faith—a land—or, at least, a lover to defend."

"Look, Shirley!" interrupted Caroline. "What is that red speck above Stilbro' Brow? You have keener sight than I; just turn your eagle eye to it."

Miss Keeldar looked. "I see," she said: then added presently, "there is a line of red. They are soldiers—cavalry soldiers," she subjoined quickly: "they ride fast: there are six of them: they will pass us: no—they have turned off to the right: they saw our procession, and avoid it by making a circuit. Where are they going?"

"Perhaps they are only exercising their horses."

"Perhaps so. We see them no more now."

Mr Helstone here spoke.

"We shall pass through Royd Lane, to reach Nunnely Common by a short cut," said he.

And into the straits of Royd Lane they accordingly defiled. It was very narrow,—so narrow that only two could walk abreast without falling into the ditch which

ran along each side. They had gained the middle of it, when excitement became obvious in the clerical commanders: Boultby's spectacles and Helstone's Rehoboam were agitated: the curates nudged each other: Mr Hall turned to the ladies and smiled.

"What is the matter?" was the demand.

He pointed with his staff to the end of the lane before them. Lo and behold! another,—an opposition procession was there entering, headed also by men in black, and followed also, as they could now hear, by music.

"Is it our double?" asked Shirley: "our manifold wraith? Here is a card turned up."

"If you wanted a battle, you are likely to get one,—at least of looks," whispered Caroline, laughing.

"They shall not pass us!" cried the curates unanimously: "we'll not give way!"

"Give way!" retorted Helstone sternly, turning round; "who talks of giving way? You, boys, mind what you are about: the ladies, I know, will be firm; I can trust them. There is not a churchwoman here but will stand her ground against these folks, for the honour of the Establishment. What does Miss Keeldar say?"

"She asks what is it?"

"The Dissenting and Methodist schools, the Baptists, Independents, and Wesleyans, joined in unholy alliance, and turning purposely into this lane with the intention of obstructing our march and driving us back."

"Bad manners!" said Shirley; "and I hate bad manners. Of course, they must have a lesson."

"A lesson in politeness," suggested Mr Hall, who was ever for peace: "not an example of rudeness."

Old Helstone moved on. Quickening his step, he marched some yards in advance of his company. He had nearly reached the other sable leaders, when he who

appeared to act as the hostile commander-in-chief—a large, greasy man, with black hair combed flat on his forehead—called a halt. The procession paused: he drew forth a hymn-book, gave out a verse, set a tune, and they all struck up the most dolorous of canticles.

Helstone signed to his bands: they clashed out with all the power of brass. He desired them to play "Rule, Britannia," and ordered the children to join in vocally, which they did with enthusiastic spirit. The enemy was sung and stormed down; his psalm quelled: as far as noise went, he was conquered.

"Now, follow me!" exclaimd Helstone; "not at a run, but at a firm, smart pace. Be steady, every child and woman of you:—keep together:—hold on by each other's skirts, if necessary."

And he strode on with such a determined and deliberate gait, and was, besides, so well seconded by his scholars and teachers—who did exactly as he told them, neither running nor faltering, but marching with cool, solid impetus: the curates, too, being compelled to do the same, as they were between two fires,—Helstone and Miss Keeldar, both of whom watched any deviation with lynx-eyed vigilance, and were ready, the one with his cane, the other with her parasol, to rebuke the slightest breach of orders, the least independent or irregular demonstration,—that the body of Dissenters were first amazed, then alarmed, then borne down and pressed back, and at last forced to turn tail and leave the outlet from Royd Lane free. Boultby suffered in the onslaught, but Helstone and Malone, between them, held him up, and brought him through the business, whole in limb, though sorely tried in wind.

The fat Dissenter who had given out the hymn was left sitting in the ditch. He was a spirit merchant by trade, a leader of the Nonconformists, and, it was said, drank more water in that one afternoon than he had

swallowed for a twelvemonth before. Mr Hall had taken care of Caroline, and Caroline of him: he and Miss Ainley made their own quiet comments to each other afterwards on the incident. Miss Keeldar and Mr Helstone shook hands heartily when they had fairly got the whole party through the lane. The curates began to exult, but Mr Helstone presently put the curb on their innocent spirits: he remarked that they never had sense to know what to say, and had better hold their tongues; and he reminded them that the business was none of their managing.

About half-past three the procession turned back, and at four once more regained the starting-place. Long lines of benches were arranged in the close-shorn fields round the school: there the children were seated, and huge baskets, covered up with white cloths, and great smoking tin vessels were brought out. Ere the distribution of good things commenced, a brief grace was pronounced by Mr Hall, and sung by the children: their young voices sounded melodious, even touching, in the open air. Large currant buns, and hot, well-sweetened tea, were then administered in the proper spirit of liberality: no stinting was permitted on this day, at least; the rule for each child's allowance being that it was to have about twice as much as it could possibly eat, thus leaving a reserve to be carried home for such as age, sickness, or other impediment, prevented from coming to the feast. Buns and beer circulated, meantime, amongst the musicians and church-singers: afterwards the benches were removed, and they were left to unbend their spirits in licensed play.

A bell summoned the teachers, patrons, and patronesses to the schoolroom; Miss Keeldar, Miss Helstone, and many other ladies were already there, glancing over the arrangement of their separate trays and tables. Most of the female servants of the neighbour-

hood, together with the clerks', the singers', and the musicians' wives, had been pressed into the service of the day as waiters: each vied with the other in smartness and daintiness of dress, and many handsome forms were seen amongst the younger ones. About half a score were cutting bread and butter; another half-score supplying hot water, brought from the coppers of the Rector's kitchen. The profusion of flowers and evergreens decorating the white walls, the show of silver teapots and bright porcelain on the tables, the active figures, blithe faces, gay dresses flitting about everywhere, formed altogether a refreshing and lively spectacle. Everybody talked, not very loudly, but merrily, and the canary birds sang shrill in their high-hung cages.

Caroline, as the Rector's niece, took her place at one of the three first tables; Mrs Boultby and Margaret Hall officiated at the others. At these tables the élite of the company were to be entertained; strict rules of equality not being more in fashion at Briarfield than elsewhere. Miss Helstone removed her bonnet and scarf, that she might be less oppressed with the heat; her long curls, falling on her neck, served almost in place of a veil, and for the rest, her muslin dress was fashioned modestly as a nun's robe, enabling her thus to dispense with the encumbrance of a shawl.

The room was filling: Mr Hall had taken his post beside Caroline, who now, as she re-arranged the cups and spoons before her, whispered to him in a low voice remarks on the events of the day. He looked a little grave about what had taken place in Royd Lane, and she tried to smile him out of his seriousness. Miss Keeldar sat near; for a wonder, neither laughing nor talking; on the contrary, very still, and gazing round her vigilantly: she seemed afraid lest some intruder should take a seat she apparently wished to reserve next

her own: ever and anon she spread her satin dress over an undue portion of the bench, or laid her gloves or her embroidered handkerchief upon it. Caroline noticed this manège at last, and asked her what friend she expected. Shirley bent towards her, almost touched her ear with her rosy lips, and whispered with a musical softness that often characterised her tones, when what she said tended even remotely to stir some sweet secret source of feeling in her heart—"I expect Mr Moore: I saw him last night, and I made him promise to come with his sister, and to sit at our table: he won't fail me, I feel certain, but I apprehend his coming too late, and being separated from us. Here is a fresh batch arriving; every place will be taken: provoking!"

In fact Mr Wynne the magistrate, his wife, his son, and his two daughters, now entered in high state. They were Briarfield gentry: of course their place was at the first table, and being conducted thither, they filled up the whole remaining space. For Miss Keeldar's comfort, Mr Sam Wynne inducted himself into the very vacancy she had kept for Moore, planting himself solidly on her gown, her gloves, and her handkerchief. Mr Sam was one of the objects of her aversion; and the more so because he showed serious symptoms of an aim at her hand. The old gentleman, too, had publicly declared that the Fieldhead estate and the De Walden estate were delightfully *contagious*—a malapropism which rumour had not failed to repeat to Shirley.

Caroline's ears yet rung with that thrilling whisper, "I expect Mr Moore," her heart yet beat and her cheek yet glowed with it, when a note from the organ pealed above the confused hum of the place. Dr Boultby, Mr Helstone, and Mr Hall rose, so did all present, and grace was sung to the accompaniment of the music; and then tea began. She was kept too busy with her office for a while to have leisure for look-

ing round, but the last cup being filled, she threw a restless glance over the room. There were some ladies and several gentlemen standing about yet unaccommodated with seats; amidst a group she recognised her spinster friend, Miss Mann, whom the fine weather had tempted, or some urgent friend had persuaded, to leave her drear solitude for one hour of social enjoyment. Miss Mann looked tired of standing: a lady in a yellow bonnet brought her a chair. Caroline knew well that "chapeau en satin jaune;" she knew the black hair, and the kindly though rather opinionated and froward-looking face under it; she knew that "robe de soie noire;" she knew even that "schal gris de lin;" she knew, in short, Hortense Moore, and she wanted to jump up and run to her and kiss her—to give her one embrace for her own sake, and two for her brother's. She half rose, indeed, with a smothered exclamation, and perhaps—for the impulse was very strong—she would have run across the room, and actually saluted her, but a hand replaced her in her seat, and a voice behind her whispered—"Wait till after tea, Lina, and then I'll bring her to you."

And when she *could* look up she did, and there was Robert himself close behind, smiling at her eagerness, looking better than she had ever seen him look—looking, indeed, to her partial eyes, so very handsome, that she dared not trust herself to hazard a second glance; for his image struck on her vision with painful brightness, and pictured itself on her memory as vividly as if there daguerreotyped by a pencil of keen lightning.

He moved on, and spoke to Miss Keeldar. Shirley, irritated by some unwelcome attentions from Sam Wynne, and by the fact of that gentleman being still seated on her gloves and handkerchief—and probably, also, by Moore's want of punctuality—was by no means in good humour. She first shrugged her shoulder at

him, and then she said a bitter word or two about his "insupportable tardiness." Moore neither apologised nor retorted: he stood near her quietly, as if waiting to see whether she would recover her temper; which she did in little more than three minutes, indicating the change by offering him her hand. Moore took it with a smile, half corrective, half grateful: the slightest possible shake of the head delicately marked the former quality; it is probable a gentle pressure indicated the latter.

"You may sit where you can now, Mr Moore," said Shirley, also smiling: "you see there is not an inch of room for you here; but I discern plenty of space at Mrs Boultby's table, between Miss Armitage and Miss Birtwhistle; go: John Sykes will be your vis-à-vis, and you will sit with your back towards us."

Moore, however, preferred lingering about where he was: he now and then took a turn down the long room, pausing in his walk to interchange greetings with other gentlemen in his own placeless predicament: but still he came back to the magnet, Shirley, bringing with him, each time he returned, observations it was necessary to whisper in her ear.

Meantime, poor Sam Wynne looked far from comfortable; his fair neighbour, judging from her movements, appeared in a mood the most unquiet and unaccommodating: she would not sit still two seconds: she was hot; she fanned herself; complained of want of air and space. She remarked, that, in her opinion, when people had finished their tea they ought to leave the tables, and announced distinctly that she expected to faint if the present state of things continued. Mr Sam offered to accompany her into the open air; just the way to give her her death of cold, she alleged: in short, his post became untenable; and having swallowed his quantum of tea, he judged it expedient to evacuate.

Moore should have been at hand, whereas he was quite at the other extremity of the room, deep in conference with Christopher Sykes. A large corn-factor, Timothy Ramsden, Esq., happened to be nearer, and feeling himself tired of standing, he advanced to fill the vacant seat. Shirley's expedients did not fail her: a sweep of her scarf upset her teacup, its contents were shared between the bench and her own satin dress. Of course, it became necessary to call a waiter to remedy the mischief: Mr Ramsden, a stout, puffy gentleman, as large in person as he was in property, held aloof from the consequent commotion. Shirley, usually almost culpably indifferent to slight accidents affecting dress, &c., now made a commotion that might have become the most delicate and nervous of her sex; Mr Ramsden opened his mouth, withdrew slowly, and, as Miss Keeldar again intimated her intention to "give way" and swoon on the spot, he turned on his heel, and beat a heavy retreat.

Moore at last returned: calmly surveying the bustle, and somewhat quizzically scanning Shirley's enigmatical-looking countenance, he remarked, that in truth this was the hottest end of the room; that he found a climate there calculated to agree with none but cool temperaments like his own; and, putting the waiters, the napkins, the satin robe, the whole turmoil, in short, to one side, he installed himself where destiny evidently decreed he should sit. Shirley subsided; her features altered their lines: the raised knit brow and inexplicable curve of the mouth became straight again: wilfulness and roguery gave place to other expressions; and all the angular movements with which she had vexed the soul of Sam Wynne were conjured to rest as by a charm. Still, no gracious glance was cast on Moore: on the contrary, he was accused of giving her a world of trouble, and roundly charged with being the cause of

depriving her of the esteem of Mr Ramsden, and the invaluable friendship of Mr Samuel Wynne.

"Wouldn't have offended either gentleman, for the world," she averred: "I have always been accustomed to treat both with the most respectful consideration, and there, owing to you, how they have been used! I shall not be happy till I have made it up: I never am happy till I am friends with my neighbours; so to-morrow I must make a pilgrimage to Royd corn-mill, soothe the miller, and praise the grain; and next day I must call at De Walden—where I hate to go—and carry in my reticule half an oat-cake to give to Mr Sam's favourite pointers."

"You know the surest path to the heart of each swain, I doubt not," said Moore quietly. He looked very content to have at last secured his present place; but he made no fine speech expressive of gratification, and offered no apology for the trouble he had given. His phlegm became him wonderfully: it made him look handsomer, he was so composed: it made his vicinage pleasant, it was so peace-restoring. You would not have thought, to look at him, that he was a poor, struggling man seated beside a rich woman; the calm of equality stilled his aspect: perhaps that calm, too, reigned in his soul. Now and then, from the way in which he looked down on Miss Keeldar as he addressed her, you would have fancied his station towered above hers as much as his stature did. Almost stern lights sometimes crossed his brow and gleamed in his eyes: their conversation had become animated, though it was confined to a low key; she was urging him with questions —evidently he refused to her curiosity all the gratification it demanded. She sought his eye once with hers: you read, in its soft yet eager expression, that it solicited clearer replies. Moore smiled pleasantly, but his lips continued sealed. Then she was piqued and turned

away, but he recalled her attention in two minutes: he seemed making promises, which he soothed her into accepting, in lieu of information.

It appeared that the heat of the room did not suit Miss Helstone: she grew paler and paler as the process of tea-making was protracted. The moment thanks were returned, she quitted the table, and hastened to follow her cousin Hortense, who, with Miss Mann, had already sought the open air. Robert Moore had risen when she did—perhaps he meant to speak to her; but there was yet a parting word to exchange with Miss Keeldar, and while it was being uttered, Caroline had vanished.

Hortense received her former pupil with a demeanour of more dignity than warmth: she had been seriously offended by Mr Helstone's proceedings, and had all along considered Caroline to blame in obeying her uncle too literally.

"You are a very great stranger," she said austerely, as her pupil held and pressed her hand. The pupil knew her too well to remonstrate or complain of coldness; she let the punctilious whim pass, sure that her natural *bonté* (I use this French word, because it expresses just what I mean; neither goodness nor good-nature, but something between the two) would presently get the upper hand. It did: Hortense had no sooner examined her face well, and observed the change its somewhat wasted features betrayed, than her mien softened. Kissing her on both cheeks, she asked anxiously after her health: Caroline answered gaily. It would, however, have been her lot to undergo a long cross-examination, followed by an endless lecture on this head, had not Miss Mann called off the attention of the questioner, by requesting to be conducted home. The poor invalid was already fatigued: her weariness made her cross—too cross almost to

speak to Caroline; and besides, that young person's white dress and lively look were displeasing in the eyes of Miss Mann: the everyday garb of brown stuff or grey gingham, and the everyday air of melancholy, suited the solitary spinster better: she would hardly know her young friend to-night, and quitted her with a cool nod. Hortense having promised to accompany her home, they departed together.

Caroline now looked round for Shirley. She saw the rainbow scarf and purple dress in the centre of a throng of ladies, all well known to herself, but all of the order whom she systematically avoided whenever avoidance was possible. Shyer at some moments than at others, she felt just now no courage at all to join this company: she could not, however, stand alone where all others went in pairs or parties, so she approached a group of her own scholars, great girls, or rather young women, who were standing watching some hundreds of the younger children playing at blind-man's buff.

Miss Helstone knew these girls liked her, yet she was shy even with them out of school: they were not more in awe of her than she of them: she drew near them now, rather to find protection in their company than to patronise them with her presence. By some instinct they knew her weakness, and with natural politeness they respected it. Her knowledge commanded their esteem when she taught them; her gentleness attracted their regard; and because she was what they considered wise and good when *on* duty, they kindly overlooked her evident timidity when off: they did not take advantage of it. Peasant girls as they were, they had too much of her own English sensibility to be guilty of the coarse error: they stood round her still, civil, friendly, receiving her slight smiles, and rather hurried efforts to converse, with a good feeling and good breeding: the last quality being the result of the first, which soon set her at her ease.

Mr Sam Wynne coming up with great haste, to insist on the elder girls joining in the game as well as the younger ones, Caroline was again left alone. She was meditating a quiet retreat to the house, when Shirley, perceiving from afar her isolation, hastened to her side.

"Let us go to the top of the fields," she said: "I know you don't like crowds, Caroline."

"But it will be depriving you of a pleasure, Shirley, to take you from all these fine people, who court your society so assiduously, and to whom you can, without art or effort, make yourself so pleasant."

"Not quite without effort: I am already tired of the exertion: it is but insipid, barren work, talking and laughing with the good gentlefolks of Briarfield. I have been looking out for your white dress for the last ten minutes: I like to watch those I love in a crowd, and to compare them with others: I have thus compared you. You resemble none of the rest, Lina: there are some prettier faces than yours here; you are not a model-beauty like Harriet Sykes, for instance; beside her, your person appears almost insignificant; but you look agreeable—you look reflective—you look what I call interesting."

"Hush, Shirley! You flatter me."

"I don't wonder that your scholars like you."

"Nonsense, Shirley: talk of something else."

"We will talk of Moore, then, and we will watch him: I see him even now."

"Where?" And as Caroline asked the question, she looked not over the fields, but into Miss Keeldar's eyes, as was her wont whenever Shirley mentioned any object she descried afar. Her friend had quicker vision than herself; and Caroline seemed to think that the secret of her eagle acuteness might be read in her dark grey irids: or rather, perhaps, she only sought guidance by the direction of those discriminating and brilliant spheres.

"There is Moore," said Shirley, pointing right across the wide field where a thousand children were playing, and now nearly a thousand adult spectators walking about. "There—can you miss the tall stature and straight port? He looks amidst the set that surround him like Eliab amongst humbler shepherds—like Saul in a war-council: and a war-council it is, if I am not mistaken."

"Why so, Shirley?" asked Caroline, whose eye had at last caught the object it sought. "Robert is just now speaking to my uncle, and they are shaking hands; they are then reconciled."

"Reconciled not without good reason, depend on it: making common cause against some common foe. And why, think you, are Messrs Wynne and Sykes, and Armitage and Ramsden, gathered in such a close circle round them? And why is Malone beckoned to join them? When *he* is summoned, be sure a strong arm is needed."

Shirley, as she watched, grew restless: her eyes flashed.

"They won't trust me," she said: "that is always the way when it comes to the point."

"What about?"

"Cannot you feel? There is some mystery afloat: some event is expected; some preparation is to be made, I am certain: I saw it all in Mr Moore's manner this evening: he was excited, yet hard."

"Hard to *you*, Shirley!"

"Yes, to *me*. He often is hard to me. We seldom converse tête-à-tête, but I am made to feel that the basis of his character is not of eider-down."

"Yet he seemed to talk to you softly."

"Did he not? Very gentle tones and quiet manner; yet the man is peremptory and secret: his secrecy vexes me."

"Yes—Robert is secret."

"Which he has scarcely a right to be with me; especially as he commenced by giving me his confidence. Having done nothing to forfeit that confidence, it ought not to be withdrawn: but I suppose I am not considered iron-souled enough to be trusted in a crisis."

"He fears, probably, to occasion you uneasiness."

"An unnecessary precaution: I am of elastic materials, not soon crushed: he ought to know that: but the man is proud: he has his faults, say what you will, Lina. Observe how engaged that group appear: they do not know we are watching them."

"If we keep on the alert, Shirley, we shall perhaps find the clue to their secret."

"There will be some unusual movements ere long—perhaps to-morrow—possibly to-night. But my eyes and ears are wide open: Mr Moore, you shall be under surveillance. Be you vigilant also, Lina."

"I will: Robert is going, I saw him turn—I believe he noticed us—they are shaking hands."

"Shaking hands, with emphasis," added Shirley; "as if they were ratifying some solemn league and covenant."

They saw Robert quit the group, pass through a gate, and disappear.

"And he has not bid us good-bye," murmured Caroline.

Scarcely had the words escaped her lips, when she tried by a smile to deny the confession of disappointment they seemed to imply. An unbidden suffusion for one moment both softened and brightened her eyes.

"Oh, that is soon remedied!" exclaimed Shirley. "We'll *make* him bid us good-bye."

"*Make* him! that is not the same thing," was the answer.

"It *shall* be the same thing."

"But he is gone: you can't overtake him."

"I know a shorter way than that he has taken: we will intercept him."

"But, Shirley, I would rather not go."

Caroline said this as Miss Keeldar seized her arm, and hurried her down the fields. It was vain to contend: nothing was so wilful as Shirley, when she took a whim into her head: Caroline found herself out of sight of the crowd almost before she was aware, and ushered into a narrow shady spot, embowered above with hawthorns, and enamelled under foot with daisies. She took no notice of the evening sun chequering the turf, nor was she sensible of the pure incense exhaling at this hour from tree and plant; she only heard the wicket opening at one end, and knew Robert was approaching. The long sprays of the hawthorns, shooting out before them, served as a screen; they saw him before he observed them. At a glance Caroline perceived that his social hilarity was gone: he had left it behind him in the joy-echoing fields round the school; what remained now was his dark, quiet, business countenance. As Shirley had said, a certain hardness characterised his air, while his eye was excited, but austere. So much the worse-timed was the present freak of Shirley's: if he had looked disposed for holiday mirth, it would not have mattered much, but now——

"I told you not to come," said Caroline, somewhat bitterly, to her friend. She seemed truly perturbed: to be intruded on Robert thus, against her will and his expectation, and when he evidently would rather not be delayed, keenly annoyed her. It did not annoy Miss Keeldar in the least: she stepped forward and faced her tenant, barring his way—"You omitted to bid us good-bye," she said.

"Omitted to bid you good-bye! Where did you come from? Are you fairies? I left two like you,

one in purple and one in white, standing at the top of a bank, four fields off, but a minute ago."

"You left us there and find us here. We have been watching you; and shall watch you still: you must be questioned one day, but not now: at present, all you have to do is to say good-night, and then pass."

Moore glanced from one to the other, without unbending his aspect. "Days of fête have their privileges, and so have days of hazard," observed he gravely.

"Come—don't moralise: say good-night, and pass," urged Shirley.

"Must I say good-night to you, Miss Keeldar?"

"Yes, and to Caroline likewise. It is nothing new, I hope: you have bid us both good-night before."

He took her hand, held it in one of his, and covered it with the other: he looked down at her gravely, kindly, yet commandingly. The heiress could not make this man her subject: in his gaze on her bright face there was no servility, hardly homage; but there was interest and affection, heightened by another feeling: something in his tone when he spoke, as well as in his words, marked that last sentiment to be gratitude.

"Your debtor bids you good-night!—May you rest safely and serenely till morning!"

"And you, Mr Moore,—what are you going to do? What have you been saying to Mr Helstone, with whom I saw you shake hands? Why did all those gentlemen gather round you? Put away reserve for once: be frank with me."

"Who can resist you? I will be frank: to-morrow, if there is anything to relate, you shall hear it."

"Just now," pleaded Shirley: "don't procrastinate."

"But I could only tell half a tale; and my time is limited,—I have not a moment to spare: hereafter I will make amends for delay by candour."

"But are you going home?"

"Yes."

"Not to leave it any more to-night?"

"Certainly not. At present, farewell to both of you!"

He would have taken Caroline's hand and joined it in the same clasp in which he held Shirley's, but somehow it was not ready for him; she had withdrawn a few steps apart: her answer to Moore's adieu was only a slight bend of the head, and a gentle, serious smile. He sought no more cordial token: again he said "Farewell!" and quitted them both.

"There!—it is over!" said Shirley, when he was gone. "We have made him bid us good-night, and yet not lost ground in his esteem, I think, Cary."

"I hope not," was the brief reply.

"I consider you very timid and undemonstrative," remarked Miss Keeldar. "Why did you not give Mr Moore your hand when he offered you his? He is your cousin: you like him. Are you ashamed to let him perceive your affection?"

"He perceives all of it that interests him: no need to make a display of feeling."

"You are laconic: you would be stoical if you could. Is love, in your eyes, a crime, Caroline?"

"Love a crime! No, Shirley:—love is a divine virtue; but why drag that word into the conversation? it is singularly irrelevant!"

"Good!" pronounced Shirley.

The two girls paced the green lane in silence. Caroline first resumed.

"Obtrusiveness is a crime; forwardness is a crime; and both disgust: but love!—no purest angel need blush to love! And when I see or hear either man or woman couple shame with love, I know their minds are coarse, their associations debased. Many who think themselves refined ladies and gentlemen, and on whose lips the word

'vulgarity' is for ever hovering, cannot mention 'love' without betraying their own innate and imbecile degradation: it is a low feeling in their estimation connected only with low ideas for them."

"You describe three-fourths of the world, Caroline."

"They are cold—they are cowardly—they are stupid on the subject, Shirley! They never loved—they never were loved!"

"Thou art right, Lina! And in their dense ignorance they blaspheme living fire, seraph-brought from a divine altar."

"They confound it with sparks mounting from Tophet!"

The sudden and joyous clash of bells here stopped the dialogue by summoning all to the church.

Chapter xviij.

WHICH THE GENTEEL READER IS RECOMMENDED TO SKIP, LOW PERSONS BEING HERE INTRODUCED.

THE evening was still and warm; close and sultry it even promised to become. Round the descending sun the clouds glowed purple; summer tints, rather Indian than English, suffused the horizon, and cast rosy reflections on hill-side, house-front, tree-bole; on winding road, and undulating pasture-ground. The two girls came down from the fields slowly: by the time they reached the churchyard the bells were hushed; the multitudes were gathered into the church: the whole scene was solitary.

"How pleasant and calm it is!" said Caroline.

"And how hot it will be in the church!" responded Shirley; "and what a dreary long speech Dr Boultby

will make! and how the curates will hammer over their prepared orations! For my part, I would rather not enter."

"But my uncle will be angry, if he observes our absence."

"I will bear the brunt of his wrath: he will not devour me. I shall be sorry to miss his pungent speech. I know it will be all sense for the Church, and all causticity for Schism: he'll not forget the battle of Royd Lane. I shall be sorry also to deprive you of Mr Hall's sincere friendly homily, with all its racy Yorkshireisms; but here I must stay. The grey church and greyer tombs look divine with this crimson gleam on them. Nature is now at her evening prayers: she is kneeling before those red hills. I see her prostrate on the great steps of her altar, praying for a fair night for mariners at sea, for travellers in deserts, for lambs on moors, and unfledged birds in woods. Caroline, I see her! and I will tell you what she is like: she is like what Eve was when she and Adam stood alone on earth."

"And that is not Milton's Eve, Shirley."

"Milton's Eve! Milton's Eve! I repeat. No, by the pure Mother of God, she is not! Cary, we are alone: we may speak what we think. Milton was great; but was he good? His brain was right; how was his heart? He saw heaven: he looked down on hell. He saw Satan, and Sin his daughter, and Death their horrible offspring. Angels serried before him their battalions: the long lines of adamantine shields flashed back on his blind eyeballs the unutterable splendour of heaven. Devils gathered their legions in his sight: their dim, discrowned, and tarnished armies passed rank and file before him. Milton tried to see the first woman; but, Cary, he saw her not."

"You are bold to say so, Shirley."

"Not more bold than faithful. It was his cook that

he saw; or it was Mrs Gill, as I have seen her, making custards, in the heat of summer, in the cool dairy, with rose-trees and nasturtiums about the latticed window, preparing a cold collation for the rectors,—preserves, and 'dulcet creams'—puzzled 'what choice to choose for delicacy best; what order so contrived as not to mix tastes, not well-joined, inelegant; but bring taste after taste, upheld with kindliest change.'"

"All very well too, Shirley."

"I would beg to remind him that the first men of the earth were Titans, and that Eve was their mother: from her sprang Saturn, Hyperion, Oceanus; she bore Prometheus"——

"Pagan that you are! what does that signify?"

"I say, there were giants on the earth in those days: giants that strove to scale heaven. The first woman's breast that heaved with life on this world yielded the daring which could contend with Omnipotence: the strength which could bear a thousand years of bondage,—the vitality which could feed that vulture death through uncounted ages,—the unexhausted life and uncorrupted excellence, sisters to immortality, which, after millenniums of crimes, struggles, and woes, could conceive and bring forth a Messiah. The first woman was heaven-born: vast was the heart whence gushed the well-spring of the blood of nations; and grand the undegenerate head where rested the consort-crown of creation."

"She coveted an apple, and was cheated by a snake: but you have got such a hash of Scripture and mythology into your head that there is no making any sense of you. You have not yet told me what you saw kneeling on those hills."

"I saw—I now see—a woman-Titan: her robe of blue air spreads to the outskirts of the heath, where yonder flock is grazing; a veil white as an avalanche

sweeps from her head to her feet, and arabesques of lightning flame on its borders. Under her breast I see her zone, purple like that horizon: through its blush shines the star of evening. Her steady eyes I cannot picture; they are clear—they are deep as lakes—they are lifted and full of worship—they tremble with the softness of love and the lustre of prayer. Her forehead has the expanse of a cloud, and is paler than the early moon, risen long before dark gathers: she reclines her bosom on the ridge of Stilbro' Moor; her mighty hands are joined beneath it. So kneeling, face to face she speaks with God. That Eve is Jehovah's daughter, as Adam was His son."

"She is very vague and visionary! Come, Shirley, we ought to go into church."

"Caroline, I will not: I will stay out here with my mother Eve, in these days called Nature. I love her, undying, mighty being! Heaven may have faded from her brow when she fell in paradise; but all that is glorious on earth shines there still. She is taking me to her bosom, and showing me her heart. Hush, Caroline! you will see her and feel her as I do, if we are both silent."

"I will humour your whim; but you will begin talking again, ere ten minutes are over."

Miss Keeldar, on whom the soft excitement of the warm summer evening seemed working with unwonted power, leaned against an upright headstone: she fixed her eyes on the deep-burning west, and sank into a pleasurable trance. Caroline, going a little apart, paced to and fro beneath the Rectory garden-wall, dreaming, too, in her way. Shirley had mentioned the word "mother:" that word suggested to Caroline's imagination not the mighty and mystical parent of Shirley's visions, but a gentle human form—the form she ascribed to her own mother; unknown, unloved, but not unlonged for.

"Oh, that the day would come when she would remember her child! Oh, that I might know her, and knowing, love her!"

Such was her aspiration.

The longing of her childhood filled her soul again. The desire which many a night had kept her awake in her crib, and which fear of its fallacy had of late years almost extinguished, relit suddenly, and glowed warm in her heart: that her mother might come some happy day, and send for her to her presence—look upon her fondly with loving eyes, and say to her tenderly, in a sweet voice—"Caroline, my child, I have a home for you: you shall live with me. All the love you have needed, and not tasted, from infancy, I have saved for you carefully. Come! it shall cherish you now."

A noise on the road roused Caroline from her filial hopes, and Shirley from her Titan visions. They listened, and heard the tramp of horses: they looked, and saw a glitter through the trees: they caught through the foliage glimpses of martial scarlet; helm shone, plume waved. Silent and orderly, six soldiers rode softly by.

"The same we saw this afternoon," whispered Shirley: "they have been halting somewhere till now. They wish to be as little noticed as possible, and are seeking their rendezvous at this quiet hour, while the people are at church. Did I not say we should see unusual things ere long?"

Scarcely were sight and sound of the soldiers lost, when another and somewhat different disturbance broke the night-hush—a child's impatient scream. They looked: a man issued from the church, carrying in his arms an infant—a robust, ruddy little boy, of some two years old—roaring with all the power of his lungs; he had probably just awaked from a church-sleep: two

little girls, of nine and ten, followed. The influence of the fresh air, and the attraction of some flowers gathered from a grave, soon quieted the child; the man sat down with him, dandling him on his knee as tenderly as any woman; the two little girls took their places one on each side.

"Good evening, William," said Shirley, after due scrutiny of the man. He had seen her before, and apparently was waiting to be recognised; he now took off his hat, and grinned a smile of pleasure. He was a rough-headed, hard-featured personage, not old, but very weather-beaten; his attire was decent and clean, that of his children singularly neat; it was our old friend, Farren. The young ladies approached him.

"You are not going into the church?" he inquired, gazing at them complacently, yet with a mixture of bashfulness in his look: a sentiment not by any means the result of awe of their station, but only of appreciation of their elegance and youth. Before gentlemen—such as Moore or Helstone, for instance—William was often a little dogged; with proud or insolent ladies, too, he was quite unmanageable, sometimes very resentful; but he was most sensible of, most tractable to, good-humour and civility. His nature—a stubborn one—was repelled by inflexibility in other natures; for which reason, he had never been able to like his former master, Moore; and unconscious of that gentleman's good opinion of himself, and of the service he had secretly rendered him in recommending him as gardener to Mr Yorke, and by this means to other families in the neighbourhood, he continued to harbour a grudge against his austerity. Latterly, he had often worked at Fieldhead; Miss Keeldar's frank, hospitable manners were perfectly charming to him. Caroline he had known from her childhood: unconsciously she was his ideal of a lady. Her gentle mien, step, gestures, her grace of

person and attire, moved some artist-fibres about his peasant heart: he had a pleasure in looking at her, as he had in examining rare flowers, or in seeing pleasant landscapes. Both the ladies liked William: it was their delight to lend him books, to give him plants; and they preferred his conversation far before that of many coarse, hard, pretentious people, immeasurably higher in station.

"Who was speaking, William, when you came out?" asked Shirley.

"A gentleman ye set a deal of store on, Miss Shirley —Mr Donne."

"You look knowing, William. How did you find out my regard for Mr Donne?"

"Ay, Miss Shirley, there's a gleg light i' your een sometimes which betrays you. You look raight down scornful sometimes, when Mr Donne is by."

"Do you like him yourself, William?"

"Me? I'm stalled o' t' curates, and so is t' wife: they've no manners; they talk to poor folk fair as if they thought they were beneath them. They're allus magnifying their office: it is a pity but their office could magnify them; but it does nought o' t' soart. I fair hate pride."

"But you are proud in your own way yourself," interposed Caroline: "you are what you call house-proud; you like to have everything handsome about you: sometimes you look as if you were almost too proud to take your wages. When you were out of work, you were too proud to get anything on credit; but for your children, I believe you would rather have starved than gone to the shops without money; and when I wanted to give you something, what a difficulty I had in making you take it!"

"It is partly true, Miss Caroline: ony day I'd rather give than take, especially from sich as ye. Look at t'

difference between us: ye're a little, young, slender lass, and I'm a great strong man: I'm rather more nor twice your age. It is not *my* part then, I think, to tak' fro' *ye*—to be under obligations (as they say) to *ye;* and that day ye came to our house, and called me to t' door, and offered me five shillings, which I doubt ye could ill spare,—for ye've no fortin', I know,—that day I war fair a rebel—a radical—an insurrectionist; and *ye* made me so. I thought it shameful that, willing and able as I was to work, I suld be i' such a condition that a young cratur about the age o' my own eldest lass suld think it needful to come and offer me her bit o' brass."

"I suppose you were angry with me, William?"

"I almost was, in a way; but I forgave ye varry soon: ye meant well. Ay, *I am* proud, and so are *ye;* but your pride and mine is t' raight mak'—what we call i' Yorkshire clean pride—such as Mr Malone and Mr Donne knows nought about: theirs is mucky pride. Now, I shall teach my lasses to be as proud as Miss Shirley there, and my lads to be as proud as myseln; but I dare ony o' 'em to be like t' curates: I'd lick little Michael, if I seed him show any signs o' that feeling."

"What is the difference, William?"

"Ye know t' difference weel enow, but ye want me to get a gate o' talking. Mr Malone and Mr Donne is almost too proud to do aught for theirsel'n; *we* are almost too proud to let anybody do aught for us. T' curates can hardly bide to speak a civil word to them they think beneath them; *we* can hardly bide to tak' an uncivil word fro' them that thinks themsel'n aboon us."

"Now, William, be humble enough to tell me truly how you are getting on in the world? Are you well off?"

"Miss Shirley—I am varry well off. Since I got

into t' gardening line, wi' Mr Yorke's help, and since Mr Hall (another o' t' raight sort) helped my wife to set up a bit of a shop, I've nought to complain of. My family has plenty to eat and plenty to wear: my pride makes me find means to save an odd pound now and then against rainy days; for I think I'd die afore I'd come to t' parish: and me and mine is content; but th' neighbours is poor yet: I see a great deal of distress."

"And, consequently, there is still discontent, I suppose?" inquired Miss Keeldar.

"*Consequently*—ye say right—*consequently*. In course, starving folk cannot be satisfied or settled folk. The country's not in a safe condition;—I'll say so mich!"

"But what can be done? What more can I do, for instance?"

"Do?—ye can do not mich, poor young lass! Ye've gi'en your brass: ye've done well. If ye could transport your tenant, Mr Moore, to Botany Bay, ye'd happen do better. Folks hate him."

"William, for shame!" exclaimed Caroline warmly. "If folks *do* hate him, it is to their disgrace, not his. Mr Moore himself hates nobody; he only wants to do his duty, and maintain his rights: you are wrong to talk so!"

"I talk as I think. He has a cold, unfeeling heart, yond' Moore."

"But," interposed Shirley, "supposing Moore was driven from the country, and his mill razed to the ground, would people have more work?"

"They'd have less. I know that, and they know that; and there is many an honest lad driven desperate by the certainty that whichever way he turns, he cannot better himself, and there is dishonest men plenty to guide them to the devil: scoundrels that reckons to be the 'people's friends,' and that knows naught about the

people, and is as insincere as Lucifer. I've lived aboon forty year in the world, and I believe that 'the people' will never have any true friends but theirsel'n, and them two or three good folk i' different stations, that is friends to all the world. Human natur', taking it i' th' lump, is naught but selfishness. It is but excessive few, it is but just an exception here and there, now and then, sich as ye two young uns and me, that being in a different sphere, can understand t' one t' other, and be friends wi'out slavishness o' one hand, or pride o' t' other. Them that reckons to be friends to a lower class than their own fro' political motives is never to be trusted: they always try to make their inferiors tools. For my own part, I will neither be patronised nor misled for no man's pleasure. I've had overtures made to me lately that I saw were treacherous, and I flung 'em back i' the faces o' them that offered 'em."

"You won't tell us what overtures?"

"I will not: it would do no good; it would mak' no difference: them they concerned can look after theirsel'n."

"Ay, we'se look after wersel'n," said another voice. Joe Scott had sauntered forth from the church to get a breath of fresh air, and there he stood.

"I'll warrant *ye*, Joe," observed William, smiling.

"And I'll warrant my maister," was the answer. "Young ladies," continued Joe, assuming a lordly air, "ye'd better go into th' house."

"I wonder what for?" inquired Shirley, to whom the overlooker's somewhat pragmatical manners were familiar, and who was often at war with him; for Joe, holding supercilious theories about women in general, resented greatly, in his secret soul, the fact of his master and his master's mill being, in a manner, under petticoat government, and had felt as wormwood and gall, certain business-visits of the heiress to the Hollow's counting-house.

"Because there is naught agate that fits women to be consarned in."

"Indeed! There is prayer and preaching agate in that church: are we not concerned in that?"

"Ye have been present neither at the prayer nor preaching, ma'am, if I have observed aright. What I alluded to was politics: William Farren, here, was touching on that subject, if I'm not mista'en."

"Well, what then? Politics are our habitual study, Joe. Do you know I see a newspaper every day, and two of a Sunday?"

"I should think you'll read the marriages, probably, Miss, and the murders, and the accidents, and sich like?"

"I read the leading articles, Joe, and the foreign intelligence, and I look over the market prices: in short, I read just what gentlemen read."

Joe looked as if he thought this talk was like the chattering of a pie. He replied to it by a disdainful silence.

"Joe," continued Miss Keeldar, "I never yet could ascertain properly whether you are a Whig or a Tory: pray which party has the honour of your alliance?"

"It is rayther difficult to explain where you are sure not to be understood," was Joe's haughty response; "but, as to being a Tory, I'd as soon be an old woman, or a young one, which is a more flimsier article still. It is the Tories that carries on the war and ruins trade; and, if I be of any party—though political parties is all nonsense—I'm of that which is most favourable to peace, and, by consequence, to the mercantile interests of this here land."

"So am I, Joe," replied Shirley, who had rather a pleasure in teasing the overlooker, by persisting in talking on subjects with which he opined she—as a woman— had no right to meddle: "partly, at least. I

have rather a leaning to the agricultural interest, too; as good reason is, seeing that I don't desire England to be under the feet of France, and that if a share of my income comes from Hollow's Mill, a larger share comes from the landed estate around it. It would not do to take any measure injurious to the farmers, Joe, I think?"

"The dews at this hour is unwholesome for females," observed Joe.

"If you make that remark out of interest in me, I have merely to assure you that I am impervious to cold. I should not mind taking my turn to watch the mill one of these summer nights, armed with your musket, Joe."

Joe Scott's chin was always rather prominent: he poked it out, at this speech, some inches farther than usual.

"But—to go back to my sheep," she proceeded—"clothier and mill-owner as I am, besides farmer, I cannot get out of my head a certain idea that we manufacturers and persons of business are sometimes a little—a *very little* selfish and short-sighted in our views, and rather *too* regardless of human suffering, rather heartless in our pursuit of gain: don't you agree with me, Joe?"

"I cannot argue, where I cannot be comprehended," was again the answer.

"Man of mystery! Your master will argue with me sometimes, Joe; he is not so stiff as you are."

"May be not: we've all our own ways."

"Joe, do you seriously think all the wisdom in the world is lodged in male skulls?"

"I think that women are a kittle and a froward generation; and I've a great respect for the doctrines delivered in the second chapter of St Paul's first Epistle to Timothy."

"What doctrines, Joe?"

"Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection.

I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man; but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

"What has that to do with the business?" interjected Shirley: that smacks of rights of primogeniture. I'll bring it up to Mr Yorke the first time he inveighs against those rights."

"And," continued Joe Scott, "Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression."

"More shame to Adam to sin with his eyes open!" cried Miss Keeldar. "To confess the honest truth, Joe, I never was easy in my mind concerning that chapter: it puzzles me."

"It is very plain, Miss: he that runs may read."

"He may read it in his own fashion," remarked Caroline, now joining in the dialogue for the first time. "You allow the right of private judgment, I suppose, Joe?"

"My certy, that I do! I allow and claim it for every line of the holy Book."

"Women may exercise it as well as men?"

"Nay: women is to take their husbands' opinion, both in politics and religion: it's wholesomest for them."

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed both Shirley and Caroline.

"To be sure; no doubt on't," persisted the stubborn overlooker.

"Consider yourself groaned down, and cried shame over, for such a stupid observation," said Miss Keeldar, "You might as well say, men are to take the opinions of their priests without examination. Of what value would a religion so adopted be? It would be mere blind, besotted superstition."

"And what is *your* reading, Miss Helstone, o' these words o' St Paul's?"

"Hem! I—I account for them in this way: he wrote that chapter for a particular congregation of Christians, under peculiar circumstances; and besides, I dare say, if I could read the original Greek, I should find that many of the words have been wrongly translated, perhaps misapprehended altogether. It would be possible, I doubt not, with a little ingenuity, to give the passage quite a contrary turn: to make it say, 'Let the woman speak out whenever she sees fit to make an objection;'—'it is permitted to a woman to teach and to exercise authority as much as may be. Man, meantime, cannot do better than hold his peace,' and so on."

"That willn't wash, Miss."

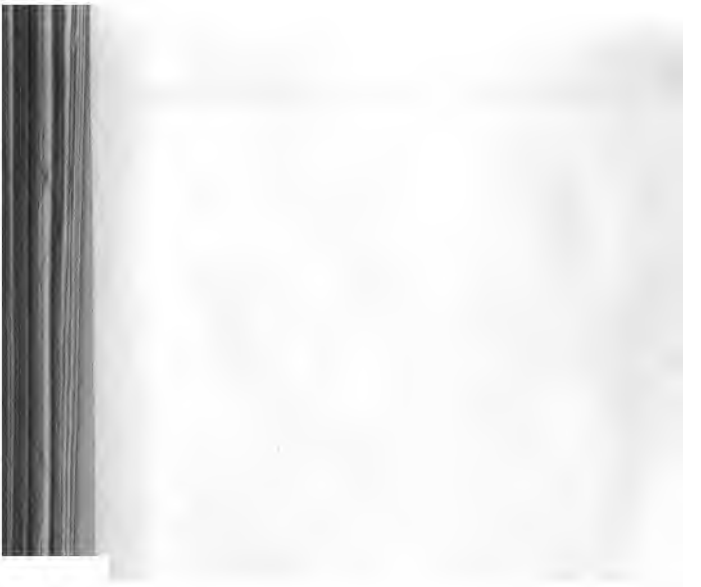
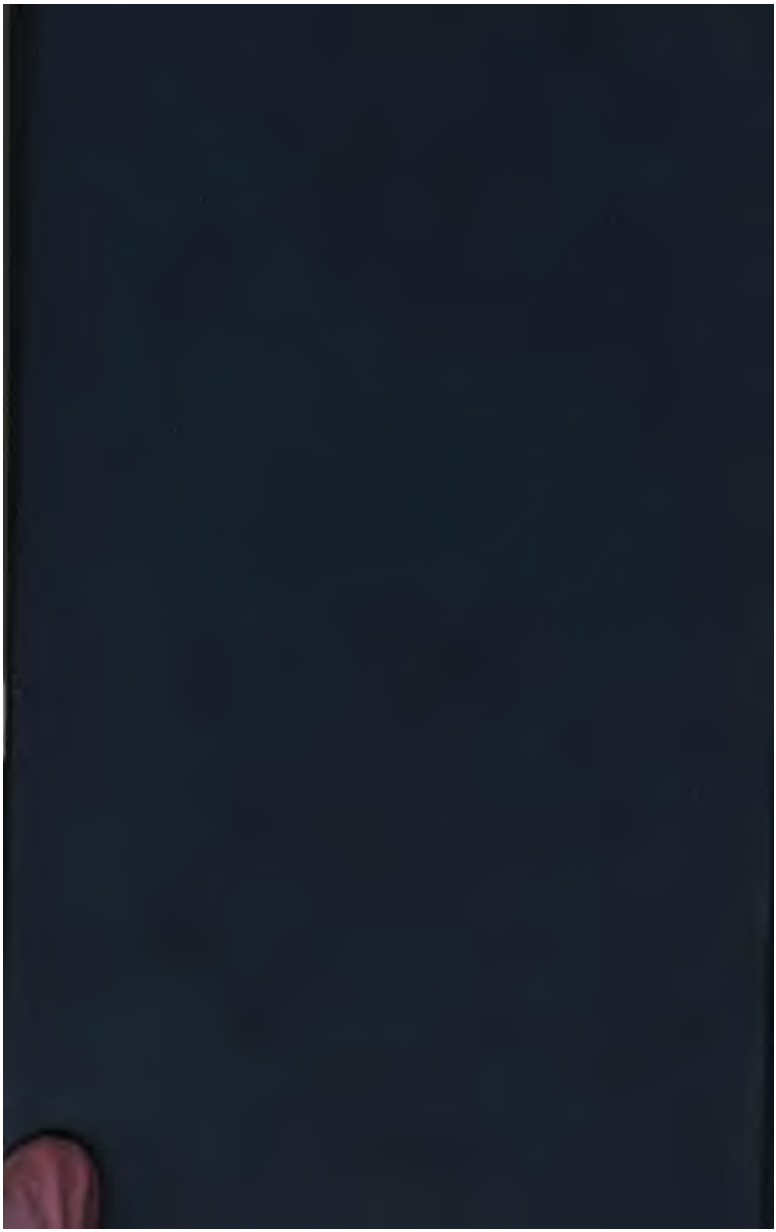
"I dare say it will. My notions are dyed in faster colours than yours, Joe. Mr Scott, you are a thoroughly dogmatical person, and always were: I like William better than you."

"Joe is well enough in his own house," said Shirley: "I have seen him as quiet as a lamb at home. There is not a better nor a kinder husband in Briarfield. He does not dogmatise to his wife."

"My wife is a hard-working, plain woman: time and trouble has ta'en all the conceit out of her; but that is not the case with you, young misses. And then you reckon to have so much knowledge; and i' my thoughts it's only superficial sort o' vanities you're acquainted with. I can tell—happen a year sin'—one day Miss Caroline coming into our counting-house when I war packing up summut behind t' great desk, and she didn't see me, and she brought a slate wi' a sum on it to t' maister: it were only a bit of a sum in practice, that our Harry would have settled i' two minutes. She couldn't do it; Mr Moore had to show her how; and when he did show her, she couldn't understand him."

"Nonsense, Joe!"

"Nay, it's no nonsense: and Miss Shirley there reckons to hearken to t' maister when he's talking ower trade, so attentive like, as if she followed him word for word, and all war as clear as a lady's looking-glass to her een; and all t' while she's peeping and peeping out o' t' window to see if t' mare stands quiet; and then looking at a bit of a splash on her riding-skirt; and then glancing glegly round at wer counting-house cob-webs and dust, and thinking what mucky folk we are, and what a grand ride she'll have just i' now ower Nunnely Common. She hears no more o' Mr Moore's talk nor if he spake Hebrew."

"Joe, you are a real slanderer. I would give you your answer, only the people are coming out of church: we must leave you. Man of prejudice, good-bye: William, good-bye. Children, come up to Fieldhead to-morrow, and you shall choose what you like best out of Mrs Gill's store-room."

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